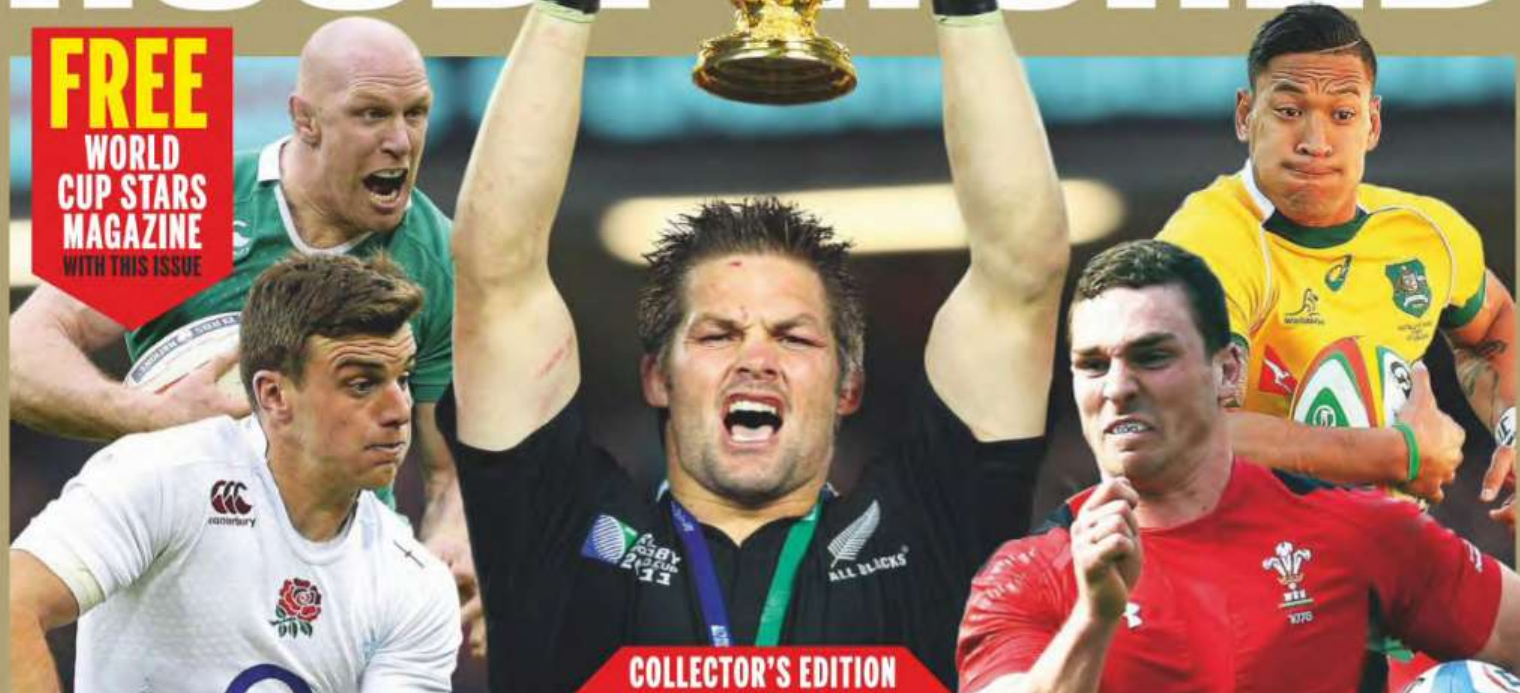


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TEAM INSIDE**
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OCTOBER 2015

A close-up photograph of a person wearing a white Superdry rugby shirt. The shirt features a large black number '10' on the chest and a Union Jack patch on the collar. The person is holding a white Superdry glove in their right hand. The background is a dark, textured blue.

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OUR OCTOBER LINE-UP



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GEORGE NORTH PAGE 78



JEROME KAINO

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PAUL O'CONNELL PAGE 70

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Welcome to the 2015 World Cup!



The dress rehearsals are over. Finally, we're going to see some live, pulsating, visceral action at RWC 2015. Nearly three million fans from around the world will attend rugby's greatest jamboree and many more will be glued to TVs as rugby swaps the back pages for the front.

It promises to be an extraordinary tournament and the questions keep on coming. Can hosts England rise to the occasion and battle their way out of Pool A? Can Wales join them at the expense of the resurgent Wallabies?

For Ireland there's the small matter of managing expectations. Having risen to second in the world rankings, they're no longer dark horses and fans are wondering whether Joe Schmidt can guide them to glory.

Scotland have more modest expectations but if they exit Pool B, belief will start coursing through their veins and then, well, who knows?

As for the usual suspects, South Africa go into the tournament unsure of their most potent line-up. Do they invest in youth, or stick with the last vestiges of their 2007 team? The All Blacks are big favourites, but have never won a World Cup on foreign soil. Will history repeat itself?

RW seeks to answer some of these pressing questions and more along with a roll-call of rugby's leading lights. In short, it's a rip-snorter of an issue. Enjoy the ride! **RW**

Owain Jones

Owain Jones, Editor

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DON'T MISS THIS MONTH



FREE with this issue is a 36-page mini mag profiling the 50 greatest World Cup players of all time – will you agree with our choices? If your mini mag is missing, please call 020 3148 4703.



Inner circle
Stuart Lancaster's England will kick off the World Cup



THIS MONTH'S WINNERS AND LOSERS



▲ WINNER

PACIFIC GAINS

Not only have Samoa agreed a deal with the union that guarantees players certain rights, but a new film, *Pacific Warriors*, will donate a significant percentage of its profits to Pacific rugby development. It is available on iTunes (11 Sep)/DVD (14 Sep).



▲ LOSER TOUTS'

TICKET TRICKS

Fans are being warned about scams selling fake World Cup tickets. Make sure you're not left out of pocket and with no real tickets by buying from official sources. Check if a ticket source is official at rugbyworldcup.com/buyofficial



▲ WINNER THE

BIG RUGBY BUZZ

The London Eye is now decorated with team flags (above). England 2015 have released educational videos to help explain the game to new fans and everyone is spreading the rugby gospel!

COVER IMAGES: GETTY IMAGES & INPHO. STATS: ALL CORRECT AS OF 28 AUGUST 2015





SHOCK FACTOR

Ireland may be famed for the choke tackle but Sean Lamont looks to have perfected the knee tackle as he stuns Simon Zebo during Scotland's 28-22 defeat by Joe Schmidt's side in Dublin.

Photo Billy Stickland/Inpho





LINE IN THE SNOW

France take team-building to the extreme as players swap studs for spikes and scrum caps for helmets as they walk down the Grande Motte glacier during a pre-World Cup training camp in Tignes.

Photo Loic Venance/AFP/Getty Images







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The Star Letter winner will receive £60-worth of rugby gear of their choice from rugbystore.co.uk

Ending the lottery

I broadly agree with Sarah Mockford's article on eligibility – the rules do need tightening (August).

But I'd make a couple of amendments to her proposals. First, the grandparent rule needs to stay as this helps eradicate anomalies that would stop others from playing for the nation of their choice. For example, George North and Jonathan Davies were born in England and play outside of Wales. If they were to marry and have children with nationals of



▲ **Exile** George North could be affected by eligibility changes

the country in which they play, those children would not be eligible for Wales.

Second, I'd like to see the residency rule start from age 18, to stop nations cherry-picking players and adding them to academies straight from school.

Ben Jones

Chippenham, Wiltshire

View from the States

I really enjoy your podcast and wanted to chime in on your debate over three v

STAR LETTER

Club ties forgotten amid World Cup fever

That magical time is fast approaching where all fans unite to follow the national side, rather than the rivalries of clubs. I'm a Tigers fan, and usually enjoy banter with a few Saints fans I work with, but these last few weeks we've been thrashing out where we think the World Cup will be won and lost, best players for each position, who will be a rising star and who will be the tournament dark horses and have a good run, etc. In short, it's all about England for the next few weeks.

The fact the World Cup is being held in England as well is really producing a wave of pride in everyone you talk to. A countdown calendar has been put up at the club I play for, and there are BBQs, family days and major events planned to coincide with the matches being broadcast.

It's amazing to see that the World Cup is becoming a focus event to people outside the sport, as we've noticed a few new faces at training and at touch who are getting into it because of the World Cup.

Craig Warmer, Birmingham, West Midlands

RW says: We share your excitement, Craig. It's a special time for the sport.



▲ **Part of the buzz** Mike Tindall, Emily Scarratt, Thom Evans and Natasha Hunt launch a sponsor's ball giveaway



▲ **Kitman** Reader Lewis Judd poses with England players at the launch of their World Cup kit. "The squad were happy to sign my new shirt," he says

five years of commitment to a nation. As a newcomer to rugby living in the USA, I feel five years is ideal for showing commitment to your adopted nation.

Jason Graves

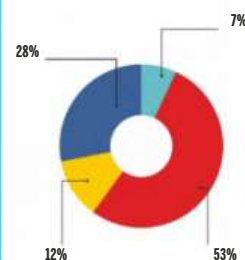
Crestview, Florida

Money talks

Numerous letters in RW convince me it's almost unanimous that fans want the team finishing top to be

THE RW POLL

Who will progress from the 'Pool of Death'? With apologies to Uruguay, here's what you said...



■ England & Australia
■ Australia & Wales
■ England & Wales
■ Eng, Wales or Aus & Fiji

champions – be it the English Premiership or the Championship. I have to remind readers that it's not about rugby but cash!

David Hicks

East Twickenham, Middlesex

RW says: There's a case for straight promotion for the Championship winner. But the play-off system works for the Premiership (and other competitions) as it allows clubs deprived of international players in mid-season to still vie for the title at the end of it.

A solution for Bath

I read with interest Bath's continuing desire to expand the Recreation Ground. Bath should look to the county cricket model where the team uses other stadia within the area. Perhaps they should build a state-of-the-art

INTOUCH

→ stadium out of town or, dare I say it, hire the UWE Stadium in Bristol, using the Rec for lesser-attended ties to maintain tradition. A sellout crowd of 20,000 v Leicester or Gloucester is a mouth-watering prospect. **Jamie Campbell-Baldwin** *HMS Collingwood* **RW says:** We'd like to think Bath will get approval for a bigger capacity at the Rec one day, but this issue has dragged on for decades.

Don't forget Cornwall Cornish people like rugby, and have a good-sized population. So my idea is that Cornwall should have an international team, and the Cornish Pirates should

compete in what was called the Celtic League. Cornwall could compete in the European Nations Cup and (also) play Tests against teams like Wales, Scotland, Samoa and even New Zealand. I'm sure Cornwall would get behind a national team. **Rory Fyfe Smith** *Conwy, North Wales* **RW says:** Good luck with your one-man crusade!

Selection farce

Surprise, surprise – England didn't select Danny Cipriani for the World Cup. Having been given little game time, he still outplayed both of the selected fly-halves and



▲ **Rugby-mad county** Cornwall supporters are as passionate as any



▲ **Ousted** Did Danny Cipriani get a raw deal in England selection?

looked a more credible back-up full-back than Alex Goode. Still, he can now put his feet up and watch a dull and one-dimensional England team struggle to qualify from their group.

Jayne Loska, by email

What World Cup?

In so-called tier-three nations like Germany, Poland, Austria and Czech Republic, almost nobody knows that the World Cup will start very soon.

Even 20 days before kick-off, there had been no presence of rugby in the media, not even on Eurosport, who show RWC games in central European countries. An opportunity is being missed I fear.

Henric Lewkowitz

Chairman Berlin Rugby Union

▼ **High point** Scarlets fan Clive Jones is just back from climbing Kilimanjaro. "Your September issue kept me going for the trip!" he says



CALLING RUGBY FANS!

Got an interesting pic? Send it to rugbyworldletters@timeinc.com and you could see it here!

RUGBY WORLD

Rugby World, Time Inc. (UK) Ltd, Seventh Floor, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark Street, London, SE1 0SU.

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Special thanks to Andy Elliott, Kyle Willoughby, Alice Furse, Juli Clausen, Nick Sero, Taylor Heyman, Ashley Lewis at adidas, Anthony Locke, Dean Chillmaid, fine weather for climbing Ben Nevis.
No thanks to Roadworks.

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Subscriptions Call 0330 333 4555, email magazinesdirect@quadrantsubs.com, write to Rugby World Subscriptions, FREEPOST CY1 061, Haywards Heath, West Sussex RH16 3BR, UK, or visit rugbyworld.com for great deals. One year (12 issues) includes P&P – UK £58.17; Europe and Eire: €80.70; USA \$132.49; Rest of world £86.50. Overseas queries call +44 (0) 330 3330 233. Back issues 01733 385170 (24 hours) Distributors Marketforce, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark Street, London SE1 0SU. Printed by Polestar
Rugby World has an audited readership of 451,000 * readers per issue.
* Source: NRS, Jul-Dec 2013

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Time Inc.



▲ **White elephant?** With the Rec capacity limited, Bath could play their tastier home fixtures at bigger locations

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WORLD XV

1

Joe Marler
ENGLAND

With a limit of only one player from each World Cup side, here's Rugby World's dream team...

S

TRAIGHT OFF the bat, we decided the spine of the team – hooker, No 8, scrum-half, fly-half and full-back – had to be strong and this World Cup XV have the ramrod-straight backbone of a drill sergeant, *writes Andrew Elliott.*

The Pumas love a good scrum and a bit of niggle so, in keeping with the finest traditions of the No 2 jersey, Agustín Creevy is our choice at hooker. His offloading skills – the Argentinian has been nicknamed 'Sonny Bill' – will get the team going forward.

FOLAU IS AS LETHAL AS AN ANGRY RATTLESNAKE – HE PROVIDES X-FACTOR

Kieran Read looked to be a shoo-in for No 8 but, as we could not fritter away our New Zealand pick, we instead plumped for Italy's Sergio Parisse, who could decorate a Christmas tree with his Man of the Match baubles.

The debate about the No 9 position lasted all of five seconds. All Black Aaron Smith is the standout scrum-half in world rugby and will form a formidable half-back pairing with Ireland and Lions fly-half Johnny Sexton, who will also be the team's goalkicker.

At full-back, we could not look past Israel Folau. Incredible under the high ball and as lethal as an angry rattlesnake in attack, the Aussie gives the side the X-factor.

With the key positions settled, the chat turned to the forwards. To

2

Agustín Creevy
ARGENTINA

4

Jamie Cudmore
CANADA

8

Sergio Parisse
ITALY

3

Davit Zirkashvili
GEORGIA

5

Leone Nakarawa
FIJI

7

Sam Warburton
WALES

The coach
Uruguay's
Pablo Lemoine



ensure there will be no backpedalling in the scrum, Creevy will be joined in the front row by the hirsute prop pairing of England's Joe Marler and Georgia's Davit Zirkashvili.

In the second row, we have gone for the 'Beauty and the Beast' option of Glasgow's Fijian Leone Nakarawa – scorer of two tries in the 39-29 win over Samoa in last month's Pacific Nations Cup final – and Canada's grizzly bear of a lock Jamie Cudmore.

Sam Warburton already has the experience of welding together a team of disparate individuals on the

triumphant 2013 Lions tour, so the Welshman is both our openside and captain. On the blind is Namibia's Jacques Burger, a man who is not afraid to put his Picasso painting of a face where others fear to tread.

Pack sorted. Now for the back-line. Our wild-card pick was South Africa centre Damian de Allende at No 12. The 23-year-old has won only a handful of Springbok caps but has already shown that he is a more than adequate replacement for Jean de Villiers. Alongside him in midfield is the USA's Chris Wyles, who showed



9

Aaron Smith
NEW ZEALAND



14

Tommy Seymour
SCOTLAND



13

Chris Wyles
USA



10

Johnny Sexton
IRELAND



15

Israel Folau
AUSTRALIA



12

Damian de Allende
SOUTH AFRICA



11

Yoshikazu Fujita
JAPAN



his versatility by popping up all over the back-line for Saracens last season.

The wings are Japan's Yoshikazu Fujita, who has scored 25 tries in 26 Tests, and Tommy Seymour, both racehorse and workhorse for Scotland.

So, amazingly for a World Cup XV, no Frenchman. Wesley Fofana was considered, so too Thierry Dusautoir (left), but we felt neither was in the form to justify their place. So, in true Gallic fashion, expect to see both light up the tournament.

This team could coach itself but to put a bit of fire in the players' bellies, Uruguay coach Pablo Lemoine, who cried when his side qualified for this World Cup, will be head honcho.

● *Who would make your team?*
Email your 15-nation World XV to rugbyworldletters@timeinc.com

RANDOM STATS

The BREAKDOWN



6

The number of teams who have never won a Rugby World Cup game – Ivory Coast, Namibia, Portugal, Russia, Spain and Zimbabwe

1878 ↔ 2015

Richie Vernon is the first Scotland player to have been capped in both the backs and forwards since 1878



The age in years (and 159 days) of the youngest player to win a World Cup final – South Africa's Francois Steyn, in 2007



Sam Burgess was the first England player to be sin-binned on his debut. Calum Clark followed in the same game v France



The number of people who have scored points in two RWC finals. Jonny Wilkinson got 15 in 2003 and six in 2007

The number of professional boxing fights Sonny Bill Williams has had. He's won all seven, three by knockout



ITALY PROP MARTIN CASTROGIOVANNI

"I'm the most beautiful man in the world!"



PICS: GETTY IMAGES & UNK

Who are the jokers in the Italy squad? Obviously, me!

Are there any practical jokes you can share? There are so many jokes, but I can't comment about them. I'll tell you just one thing: Fabio Ongaro was our favourite target.

Who's your funniest team-mate?

Leonardo Sarto – he is so stupid!

Do you have any superstitions?

I walk and don't run, and I always enter the field on my left foot. I've just always done it.

What's the funniest thing you've seen or heard on the pitch?

During a 2003 World Cup match, I unwittingly ripped a dreadlock from Colin Charvis, an icon of Welsh rugby and not just because of his trademark curly hair. A lot of Welsh players pulled my hair in the next Six Nations.

I discovered at the end of the match that Colin had put a hit out on my hair – £100 for one of my plaits!

What's your guilty pleasure? My PlayStation – playing video games is great. And trading cards, like NBA and football players.

Who would play you in a film of your life? Zach Galifianakis – or more specifically Alan from *The Hangover*.

What's the silliest thing you've ever bought? Unfortunately, a lot

▲ **Life's a beach**
Castrogiovanni walking his dogs



Funny face
Sarto scores v Ireland last year

of things. I bought an expensive conjuring tricks kit during a trip to the US with Gonzalo Canale. If you look, you'll see it's never been opened.

What annoys you? Trolls – the lions behind a keyboard.

Do you have any phobias? Snakes and sharks. And 50-year-old mothers who accompany their kids to the Castro Academy, my rugby camp.

Who would you like to be stuck in a lift with? MacGyver. He'd get us out of any situation. If anyone can get you out of a stuck elevator it would be him! I'd just want to get out of there because it would be hot and stuffy.

If you could have one superpower, what would it be? A superpower... I would use it to help all children around the world. And to read people's minds and know who is fake.

Which one of your team-mates would you want to be? None. I'm the most beautiful man in the world!

What has been your most embarrassing moment? I cannot tell you those things. I was treated like a criminal when I gave my opinion.

Who would be your three dream dinner-party guests? Dan Bilzerian (wealthy playboy), Papa Francesco (the Pope) and Diego Maradona. All for different reasons.

How would you like to be remembered? Just as a good and honest guy who put his heart into it every time he pulled on a rugby jersey. I left my family and my mates

in Argentina when I was 20. It was a big change for me, but I wanted to follow my dream and play rugby. Now when I play, I do so for the honour of my family back home, for my mother and father. I try to be the best I can, so they can say, "This is my son", and feel proud about it.

What would you like to achieve outside of rugby? I would like to be known as someone who would do anything for the kids. 🐾

THE FACTS CASTRO

Age 33 (21 Oct 1981)

Born Paraná, Argentina

Club Racing

Position Prop

Height 6ft 2in

Weight 18st 5lb

Italy caps 111 (12T)

Twitter @castrito81



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#WorldCupMemories

Here are your favourite moments from RWC history, sent to us via social media



@Y15AMW Jonny Wilkinson dropping the goal in Oz back yard
@BonwickSimon Gav Hastings giving R Loe a huge hand-off '91

@richfuller Atmosphere outside the Stade before the final in '07
@_kixran_ SA's win (in 1995). It brought the nation together

Iain Borner Sheridan destroying Australian front row in 2007 1/4.
Thomas Hurley When All Blacks win cup two times in a row!

Ian Wehmeyer My dad's tears singing the anthem at 1995 final
Lau Saili Samoa winning British public's hearts in '91

Waisele Duikoro The Flying Fijians QF with South Africa in 2007
Ruth Tremlett Mandela & Pienaar: significance of that was huge

@TMMShop Lomu planting Mike Catt into the ground like a seedling potato (in 1995) #JonahLomu BestEver

@garry575 The Ferris tackle on Genia in 2011
@CityMaverick Portugal scoring against the #AllBlacks in 2007

@rogerfitz Campo and Timmy Horan on the right wing. RWC 1991 semi-final v New Zealand at Lansdowne Road

Magic moment
 Portugal celebrate Rui Cordeiro's try in 2007

SHORT PASS

RADIO GAGA

RWC 2015 is not just covered on TV. Live commentary of all the home nations games and other key matches will be on BBC Radio 5 live or 5 live sports extra. TalkSPORT will also report on all games.

SEVENS HEAVEN

Ireland (right) and Japan have qualified as core teams for the 2015-16 HSBC Women's Sevens World Series.

LEGENDARY FIXTURE

An England Legends XV will take on a World Legends XV at Allianz Park on Thursday 15 October to raise money for the Matt Hampson



Foundation and Joost van der Westhuizen's J9 Foundation. To buy tickets, visit saracens.com

ON YER BIKE!

Cirencester RFC's Scott Brandreth and Rory and Will McCarthy are cycling 720 miles for charity this month in memory of Ashley Scrivens, who died after battling cancer. For details, see ruckoffcancer.co.uk

Most World Cup games ever



MOVING ON

Eddie Jones will leave his post as Japan head coach at the end of the World Cup.

MIXED TRIUMPH

Sunday's Well Rebels from Cork won the Mixed Ability Rugby World Tournament in Bradford, beating Bumbles Bees in a thrilling final. The Spirit of Mixed Ability Rugby Trophy went to Basque outfit Gaztedi Rugby Taldea.

DAVID CAMPESE

THE OUTSPOKEN WALLABY LEGEND IS COVERING THE WORLD CUP FOR TALKSPORT



“This World Cup is too early for Australia”

IT'S A good omen for Australia that they won both the previous UK-based World Cups, in 1991 and 1999. But their pool this time will be a tightrope because it contains three of the world's top six teams. That's a joke – you'd never pick Brazil, Germany and Argentina in one pool at a football World Cup.

I think all the top teams in Pool A (Australia, England, Wales) will lose a game, and the games with Fiji and Uruguay will be vital because of points difference. The Welsh hate the English and the English hate the Welsh so it won't be like a World Cup game, it will be England-Wales in its own right, and the same for England-Australia.

I have to back Australia to come through, and home ground advantage should see England join them.

The Wallaby squad selection raised eyebrows, with only two specialist hookers and scrum-halves, but the game has moved on from when I played. Guys like Matt Giteau can play nine, ten and 12 because of their versatility. Michael Cheika wants his best possible talent on the pitch, and he's picked his squad for a reason.

World Cups are about pressure, about experience, about flair. You need good combinations in the back-line and I'd have Will Genia and Giteau as the Wallaby half-backs – Bernard Foley is a good player but he's not a traditional ten. I'd pick Tevita Kuridrani at 12 and Israel Folau at 13 – it won't happen but Folau is our most dangerous player. Drew Mitchell and Rob Horne would be my wings with Adam Ashley-Cooper at full-back.

This could be a special Wallaby team down the track but I think this World Cup is a bit early for them. We've good forwards like Skelton, Pocock and Hooper, and a couple of good young props – the scrum has improved 100% since a year ago.

If you have a great 8-9-10 you're halfway there. But we don't have a great No 8 in Australia; Palu's been around, McCalman's been around, but they haven't been able to go to the next level.

Cheika is doing a very good job. The team understands the Wallaby traditions that went missing under Robbie Deans for five years. But ideally he should have had another year in the job. He's new on the international scene (he was appointed last October) and World Cups are a totally different tournament. That said, the coach gives orders but it's the players who execute.

You need eight or nine of the best players in the

world to win a World Cup, and I make the Wallabies fifth favourites, behind New Zealand, England, Ireland and France – everyone forgets the French but they have a great World Cup record. Scotland have improved a bit but I expect South Africa and Samoa to get through that pool.

There are some easy pools in this World Cup. When we won in 1991 we played Argentina on a Friday, Samoa on the Wednesday, Wales on the Saturday. There was no easy game against a team like Uruguay.

I'd like to see the best eight teams in two pools, and the next best eight in the other two pools playing for a secondary trophy. You could have, say, Australia v England at Twickenham, with Italy v Romania as the curtain-raiser.

Rugby isn't going to change in the lower-tier countries because they haven't got the money and rugby isn't a religion like it is in places like New Zealand or Wales. When Japan play South Africa they're going to get a hiding. How is that going to help Japanese rugby? We've got to be smarter because what we have isn't really working.

That can wait for another day. Now is the time to enjoy seeing the world's best players on the biggest stage. It's great to see Giteau back, he's a decision maker and takes control. There's Folau, Mike Brown is a good attacker, George North is dangerous and it'll be interesting to see how McCaw handles the pace. The French wing Huget is a good player, jeez – one-on-one he'll leave defenders for dead. All in all, it should be a tournament to savour. **EW**

▼ **Back in harness**
Matt Giteau should be at No 10, says Campo



PICS: GETTY IMAGES, INFO & RETRIS/ACTION IMAGES

HOTSHOTS

Meet two youngsters hoping to be key players for their countries come the 2019 World Cup



INTERVIEWS: KATIE FIELD. PICS: GETTY IMAGES & INPHO

GARRY RINGROSE LEINSTER

AGE 20 COUNTRY IRELAND POSITION CENTRE



Who got you into rugby? My dad Niall was helping with the coaching at Blackrock College rugby club and took me along when I was five or six. I was there until I was ten, then started rugby at Blackrock College school.

Have you played in other positions? I was a scrum-half until I was 16 or 17, then I had a growth spurt and moved out to full-back for a year and then to 13 since my last year in school.

I like centre because your skills are challenged in tight spaces, yet you can also get the ball in space. Defensively it's quite challenging and I enjoy that, even if it's not always successful!

Who have been your mentors?

At school at Blackrock it was Peter Smith and Gareth Pickering, as they introduced me to playing centre. There have been a number of others since, including Wayne Mitchell and Girvan Dempsey at Leinster.

When did you join Leinster? I was a second-string player at school, but I got the chance to go to a Leinster U20 trial as I was finishing school, then played for their U20s. Off the back of that I got picked for Ireland U20 in 2014 and got my Leinster Academy contract last summer. It was a bit of a roller coaster.

Who did you play for last season? UCD, and I had a couple of British & Irish Cup chances with Leinster A.

What are your aims now? With players being away at the World Cup, I might get opportunities in Leinster training and if an injury or two goes my way, I could sneak onto the bench. I've improved a lot since last year but I'm nowhere near where I want to be yet. I just try to be better at the end of each day than at the start of it.

▲ **Kicking on**
Ringrose in action
v Wales this year



Every player featured as a Rugby World Hotshot will receive a one-year subscription to the magazine. If you have any Hotshot nominations, then please email rugbyworldletters@timeinc.com

RW VERDICT

Ringrose, who played at outside-centre in all five of Ireland's U20 World Cup games this year, fought hard to get his chance in pro rugby. This business and law degree student has the brains, talent and footwork to go far.

AARON MORRIS SARACENS

AGE 20 COUNTRY ENGLAND POSITION FULL-BACK/WING



When did you start playing rugby? At Bedford Junior Blues when I was five. From the age of 18 I was training with the Saracens Senior Academy but still playing for Bedford.

Did you play other sports? I played county cricket as an opening bowler, county athletics at 200m and golf. At 15 I had to make the decision about which one to continue with and rugby was the one I enjoyed the most.

Have you played in different positions? I played at fly-half until about 16, then I was advised to move to full-back. I can play wing too.

You've done a bit of goalkicking... When there are long-distance kicks I tend to get thrown the ball. I have always been able to hit it quite a long way. I practise a lot because I want to be a good option for any kick.

Who has had a big influence on you? My dad Rick. Also Alan Brown, who was my teacher at Biddenham Upper School, Mike Rayer at Bedford and now Don Barrell at Saracens.

When did you first play for England age groups? I played England Clubs at 17 or 18, then for England Schools U18 and then the U20s. I played the majority of my rugby for England U20 last season because I was out for six months with a series of groin injuries.

What are your aims for the new season? Now there's no more age-group stuff it's about going back to my club, progressing through the ranks and trying to get as much game time in a Saracens shirt as I can.

RW VERDICT

This 6ft 3in back started all five games as England reached the final of this year's World Rugby U20 Championship, having helped them win the title in 2014. He should thrive in the senior game.








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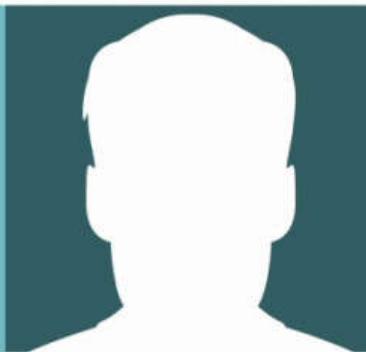
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THE SECRET PLAYER

THIS FORMER INTERNATIONAL GIVES US A UNIQUE INSIGHT INTO THE PRO GAME



“Most ‘breakthrough acts’ are insufferable”

IN MANY ways, rugby's profile has never been higher than it is right now. We have great TV coverage, endless articles in broadsheets – all of them about Sam Burgess, admittedly – and players endorsing products as diverse as health insurance and mobile phone companies. Oh, hang on, both of those are Jonny Wilkinson tie-ins.

There is the paradox. Although rugby has never before been such a part of the mainstream, there is currently no active northern hemisphere player who transcends the sport as Saint Jonny did and still does. Or even, Lord protect us, as Matt Dawson or Austin Healey have done. England is hosting a World Cup, yet the admirable Chris Robshaw could walk down almost any home county high street and provoke barely a double take.

Clearly winning the thing would change this, but the fact is that merely playing in a World Cup-winning team is not enough to guarantee nationwide and lifelong fame, as it would in, say, football. The nature of the game makes it very hard to stand out from the general mayhem, as half the team are stuck in rucks and the others are too busy ‘facilitating’ to attract much attention. To end up on Joe Bloggs’s radar, you not only have to play in a highly successful team, you either have to score loads of tries or kick all the goals, thus ensuring plenty of close-up camera time. Or else retire and do *Strictly Come Dancing*.

Nonetheless, when young men first realise their dream of becoming pros, or even getting a cap or two, they automatically assume universal adulation and acclaim will follow. Throughout school or uni they might have enjoyed preferential treatment and possibly the interest of a certain type of girl, by dint of being in the hallowed first XV, so why shouldn’t they expect that to continue into an adult career? And if this is what they’re after, they may not be entirely disappointed, at least on a local level. Being a run-of-the-mill international player confers the smallest possible amount of celebrity, but more so in those smaller countries where there really isn’t much else going on.

Suddenly finding yourself elevated to even very minor ‘stardom’ within our small corner of the sporting universe can have predictable effects. I’ve come across very few who, after breaking into their national team, don’t spend a few seasons acting like utter gits (Saint Jonny again the exception). Their behaviour may or may not adversely affect their game, but certainly away from the training ground most ‘breakthrough acts’ are insufferable.



▲ **How do you do?**
Chris Robshaw meets a few England fans

I include myself. I remember the feeling of having it all worked out just because I’d had a couple of seven out of tens from Stephen Jones or had been offered a car by my local Kia dealership. Self-satisfied doesn’t begin to cover it. After a few years the novelty of course wears off, you realise no one really knows anything and it becomes a job like any other. If endorsements do come they are treated as a little zero-effort bonus, rather than as any validation.

Yet year after year, you have to put up with the new batch getting carried away. I remember being roundly mocked by my opposite number at a post-Test dinner for having a Casio watch while he pulled back his sleeve to reveal a ten grand Rolex. Meanwhile – this was at the peak of WAG culture – girlfriends round the table screeched at the waiter for more “VERVE!” I presumed they meant Veuve and realised then my interest in any status which goes with a rugby career had long since disappeared.

But equally, you can’t look a gift horse in the mouth. In the aftermath of the 2003 World Cup, it seemed the England squad hadn’t really foreseen the money and attention that would go along with their victory but they weren’t going to pass up the opportunity. They weren’t necessarily cynical about maximising their returns but, perhaps as it was an older squad, many went about the harvest in a very businesslike, matter-of-fact way.

It goes without saying that they deserved everything that came their way, of course. I’m sure every home nations player is just praying they might find themselves in such an enviable position come the end of October. **EW**

Honouring Nevin

RW's Owain Jones reports on Ulster's new attraction

WHEN ULSTER centre Nevin Spence died three years ago this month, aged just 22, along with his father Noel and brother Graham in a slurry accident, the rugby world mourned. Ulster is built on family values, so when it came to naming a new interactive, educational facility built in Ravenhill's Memorial Stand, the decision wasn't difficult. The Nevin Spence Centre, which was opened by the Northern Ireland Sports Minister Carál Ní Chuilín last month, aims to appeal to local fans from both sides of the religious divide.

Ulster and Ireland centre Luke Marshall was a close friend of Spence and is thrilled with the new attraction. He says: "The players had a sneaky tour before it opened. It was our aim to prolong Nevin's memory with something tangible. The Centre is a way of appealing to fans of all ages."

It's full of interactive attractions. You can build your dream Ulster team, try out a virtual kicking simulator or learn how to sidestep like Tommy Bowe. You can also read up on Ulster's history, which has produced icons Mike Gibson, Willie John McBride and Jack Kyle, right up to the modern-day stars like Rory Best, Andrew Trimble and Bowe.

"It's a pretty cool space," says Marshall. "There are loads of pieces




Lost talent
Nevin Spence in action for Ulster

of rugby history to browse like Jack Kyle's Queen's University blazer and Dick Milliken's 1974 Lions shirt."

Ulster hope the Centre will attract schoolchildren from the surrounding area, promoting a unifying message.

As for Spence, Marshall thinks his old friend would approve. "Nevin took his rugby very seriously. He was honest and hard-working and preferred to keep his head down. Nowadays players can be defined by their profession but Nevin was different. He wanted to be defined by the person he was away from the sport. If Ulster can stick with those principles they won't go far wrong."

Find out more about the Nevin Spence Centre at ulsterrugby.com 



PICS: GETTY IMAGES, INPHO & ULSTER

▲ **Theatre of dreams** Ulster hope their brand-new educational facility can inspire local schoolchildren



Finn Russell

The Glasgow and Scotland fly-half gives us some insights into his life...

TOUGHEST OPPONENT

► It has to be the great Ireland and Leinster centre Brian O'Driscoll. Whenever I played against him he was always one step ahead of the game.



FAVOURITE TV SHOW

▲ I would probably say it's *Come Dine With Me* as one of my flatmates watches it all the time, so you kind of get into it.



FAVOURITE FOOTBALLER

▲ Big Ronaldo was my favourite player – that's when he played for the Brazil national team back in the day.

BEST HOLIDAY

♥ I visited Australia and New Zealand with my family when I was 15 years old and that was really good. But I'd say going to Magaluf with my mates would be the best one.



IF YOU COULD BE ANYONE ELSE...

◀ It has to be big Al Kellock because he is the undisputed king of Glasgow. He can even get free lifts from black cabs in the town if he wants to!

Tim stepping in for Samoa

THERE'S THE road less travelled and then there's the one Samoa's hot-stepper Tim Nanai-Williams has taken to get to this Rugby World Cup, writes *RW's* Alan Dymock.

Widely recognised as one of Super Rugby's most unpredictable runners, Nanai-Williams was put on the international stage by New Zealand Sevens in 2008. But despite this first step on the ladder to being an All Black, he never got any further. With his sevens caps, he was inextricably tied to the land of his birth.

That is until a loophole presented itself. With sevens becoming an Olympic sport, players could switch international allegiance if they were prepared to go on the Sevens World Series and play an active role in four legs of the qualification process.

Nanai-Williams's parents are both Samoan and the Chiefs back speaks the language fluently. He wanted to wear Samoan blue. But still, mixing sevens with Super Rugby wasn't easy.

"Yeah, it was really demanding," Nanai-Williams tells *Rugby World*.

"I've always wanted to play for Manu Samoa. My roots are from Samoa, Mum and Dad are from there as well. I'm very grateful that I've got the opportunity to swap nations thanks to this Olympic loophole."

The back-three flyer admits that while the allure of playing in a Rugby World Cup was great, his wasn't a snap decision. He consulted with his Counties Manukau coach Tana



Sidewinder Nanai-Williams shows his trickery against NZ

"I'M VERY GRATEFUL I GOT THE OPPORTUNITY TO SWAP NATIONS"



Past life Playing for New Zealand Sevens

Umaga – a man who at one point considered playing for Samoa rather than the All Blacks – as well as his parents and wife before taking the plunge. It paid off, as he was selected for the World Cup. It also led to a first cap against the All Blacks and his cousin Sonny Bill Williams in Samoa.

"That was my first time in Apia," Nanai-Williams says. "It was a good crowd and great to see everyone from

the village coming out to support us. We didn't get the result we wanted but it's going to go down in history as the first game against the All Blacks in Apia and hopefully we can get many more games there."

As for his own game, the full-back is not your typical Samoan brute. What sets him apart from his team-mates?

"God blessed me with many talents and hopefully I can showcase that on the big stage. All I've got to do is do the little things right and I'll do whatever I can to get this team where it should be. Hopefully we can get to that final and bring the cup home!" *RW*

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

CLIVE NORLING

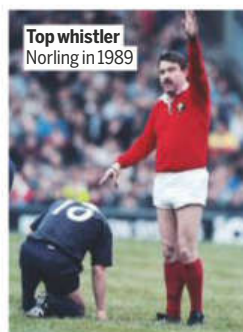
AGE 65 POSITION REFEREE AT RWC 1987 NATIONALITY WELSH TESTS 35

In 1987 I was a lecturer in business at Swansea IHE. Refereeing was my hobby. I applied for a leave of absence to go to the World Cup in New Zealand. For fitness, I'd run up and down the stairs at Swansea Institute, six flights up and six down.

The first game I did was Canada v Tonga in Napier. Tonga had to get permission to play on a Sunday off a priest. Canada won at a trot (37-4) and being a Sunday, NZ TV couldn't show adverts, so at half-time they filmed the speech by Canada

captain Hans de Goede. It was very inspirational and New Zealanders were impressed.

I also refereed the France v Fiji quarter-final. It was my first game at Eden Park since the flour bomb Test of 1981, so whenever I heard a plane overhead I was a bit twitchy. Fiji threw the ball around like it was sevens but France ground them down (31-16).



Top whistler Norling in 1989

I had a nervous breakdown after making my hobby my job. I became the WRU's Director of Referees in 1998 but the stress led to me being diagnosed with clinical depression for seven years.

Nowadays I mentor young referees. I'm also a research champion for the National Centre for Mental Health and president of Birchgrove RFC.

STEPHEN FERRIS

THE FORMER ULSTER FLANKER WHO WON 35 CAPS FOR IRELAND



“Ireland have liked being underdogs, but we’ve done better being favourites recently”

IT WAS weird to see Ireland ranked as number two in the world recently. It certainly wasn't likely when I played, but it's definitely fully deserved.

With all the expectations now, these players won't feel any added pressure as it's been a progression.

It's Joe Schmidt everyone will be looking to, because he's there to win and he's been doing that. A few people have said: "What if Joe had come in six years ago?" In those years when Wales won Grand Slams, before the last World Cup, it would have been interesting to see what Joe could do with the likes of Ronan O'Gara, Peter Stringer and Brian O'Driscoll in their prime. I'd have liked to work with Joe.

It's been very easy to be negative about Ireland's previous World Cups, but this time round – and no disrespect to the other teams – a few wins will set up a final pool game with France. It should be a cracker.

Joe will make use of his squad before that. In 2007 we used the same 23 to 24 players for all of our pool games and it made the squad feel separated. In 2011 everyone got a chance. It did a lot for the team and kept players fresh and I think it will be the same this year.

There was so much we did right in 2011. We played really well in the pool and felt like we were building nicely. But one thing you can't do when it comes to quarter-finals is not turn up. Everyone in the squad – management included – knew we were the better team on paper. But that counts for nothing. You have to perform when it matters. And Wales did. It only hits home when you're sitting in the changing room licking your wounds, realising that you're on the next plane home to Dublin.

So much was said in the papers before that game about who should be at nine and ten. Some said O'Gara should start, as he did in the last two pool games, while others said Johnny Sexton should start as he'd done when we beat Australia. The message from the coaches on this was never clear – the players never knew where they stood – and O'Gara started, with Sexton coming on at centre.

With Joe as coach and Paul O'Connell captain in his last campaign, this shouldn't happen again. Both men may not always see eye to eye, but that's because both are so good and so used to being right. They make it work and both listen. For example, if Joe puts something on the table and says that's how Ireland should play, and Rob Kearney says he doesn't agree with that plan, Joe will listen. He may not change his mind but he'll hear players out.

As for O'Connell, he epitomises professional rugby. Where he leads, players follow. I'm not sure if it's the tone of his voice but whenever he opens his mouth you listen to what he has to say. He also has experience of World Cup disappointments.

It's good that Joe has won more or less everything as a coach, bar a World Cup. It's good there are kids who just want to give it a lash. But it's also good that some senior players know what it's like to lose a quarter-final, to learn from it.

In the past we put in the odd good performance, like the win against Australia in 2011 – at the time I didn't think too much about it or *that* hit on Will Genia until my parents sent me pictures of the papers the next day. But now every time we face teams like England and Wales we expect to win.

I don't think Ireland will win the whole thing but they can get very close. In the past Ireland have liked being the underdog, but we've done a lot better being favourites recently, haven't we? **mw**

▼ **Cracking contest**
Ireland and France will
duel again in Pool D



PICS: GETTY IMAGES & INPHO

"This international rugby lark is a piece of a cake"



PICS: RICHARD LANE & LEO WILKINSON PHOTOGRAPHY

G

EORGE KRUIS and David Wilson look to be enjoying themselves as they indulge in some cake during a shoot to

promote the Festival of Rugby. But what might the pair be saying?

Write a caption of no more than 20 words, mark it 'October Caption Comp' and email it to rugbyworldcompetitions@timeinc.com. Or write to the editorial address on P14. Please include your name and address. The closing date is Friday 16 October.

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"The sign said, 'Pass down the carriage'!"



LAST MONTH'S WINNER

Carolyn Owens, from Havant in Hampshire, amused us with her caption for this pic of Wasps' Nathan Hughes taking the Underground to a promo event.

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Keep scrums marching

Too often teams stop driving and start appealing for a penalty, says RW's Alan Dymock

IT WAS one of those moments that made me sit up and take notice. Had Kieran Read just dribbled a ball at the back of a scrum against Samoa for around 10m, while the referee had not blown up as one team retreated and also allowed the No 8 to get the ball away and play?

I rubbed my eyes and hit rewind, going back past the 57-minute mark of the Apia Test in July. There it was. The NZ scrum had gone forward powerfully and fairly, Read controlled the ball and no one was begging the ref to stop proceedings. This was positive scrum play with no desire to milk penalties. It was truly beautiful.

Well I'll be damned, I thought. When was the last time I saw that? The truth is I should remember, because it is so very rare to see a team marching forward at a scrum with the intention of gaining large amounts of ground from a devastating shove rather than just wishing for a penalty.

There are good scrums out there and there are teams who intend to play adventurous stuff, but while the relatively new scrum engagement process has stopped chasing hits – thus, we are told, making things 'a fairer contest' – it hasn't made us more positive in our thinking.

A big change in attitude hasn't come in as we've wanted. Yet. By and



Reiji Ireland get a slight shove on Italy

PHOTO: JAMES HAMILTON

TEAMS HOPE TO GET THREE POINTS. WE NEED MORE LOVE FOR THE SHOVE

large, teams still hope they can get three points or a kick to touch from as many scrums as possible. When was the last time you saw an honest-to-goodness back-row move, with players using guile, several players and *movement*? All too often, if there isn't a raised arm from the ref, the No 8 trucks it up, passes to the nine, or the nine comes in to get it. We need more love for the shove.

What we don't want to lose is the attacking scrum. The march forward where we see how far a team can go before a penalty arises is unavoidable. We want silky control at the base while the opposition back-line back-pedals furiously, wondering just how the hell they are going to get in line in time to effectively defend the next move. We want back-row moves.

Because scrums can still be fun if we really want them to be. **RW**

HAVE YOUR SAY

What gets your goat? Let us know on Facebook or by tweeting @rugbyworldmag

HOT TOPIC

THIS MONTH TEST ELIGIBILITY

In our August issue, RW's Sarah Mockford put forward three ways to improve rugby's eligibility rules – read them here po.st/3eligibility. Here are your views on the so-called Flags of Convenience – join the debate on Twitter and Facebook

Make it 6, rather than 3 years' residency now.
Dafydd L. Edwards

This playing for other national sides is a disgrace,

far too easy transition, no morals. **@kevinbaxter2**

It's becoming as soft as the Rep of Ireland footy team in the 90s. You've been on



Mr resident
Josh Strauss qualifies for Scotland this month

holiday to us? Well now come and play for us!
Jon-Michael Foxall

Truth is if players perform superbly, questions fade, if not, anger builds...
@davidferg

If NZ hadn't stolen most of the islands' best players and put them into scholarships to pick for Super 15 and then the All Blacks, the islands would be better teams and

rugby world be better for it.
Brett Goodchild

Your solution still too convoluted. No passport, no play. UK passport = 5-6 years or parent born there. Simple. **@Gungehammer**

IMO if you play for your country at U20, then that's where you stay... No shirt hopping because you can't break into the first XV!
Neil Titley

 asics

IT'S GAME TIME. GO DOMINATE IT.



THE DIRECTORY

SUN 6 SEP

RWC Warm-ups

Fiji v Canada (2.30pm,
Twickenham Stoop)
Basque Selection v Uruguay

Kings of the North

Newcastle v Sale (3pm)

Guinness Pro12

Cardiff Blues v Zebre (2.30)

TV Live on S4C

Top 14

Bordeaux v Montpellier
Stade Français v Toulon
GK IPA Championship
Bristol v Bedford
Corn Pirates v Nottingham
Rotherham v Ealing
Yorkshire Carnegie v Jersey

WEEKEND 11-13 SEP

Treviso v Edinburgh

FRI 11 SEP

Guinness Pro12

Newport Gwent Dragons
v Zebre (7.05)

TV Live on BBC Wales

Glasgow v Connacht (7.15)

TV Live on BBC Alba

Ulster Bank League 1A

Old Belvedere v Terenure C
UCD v Clontarf

SAT 12 SEP

Guinness Pro12

Scarlets v Ulster (3pm)

Leinster v Cardiff Blues
(5.15pm)

TV Both on Sky Sports 2

Kings of the North

Sale v Leicester (2.30)

Top 14

Brive v Agen
Castres v Oyonnax
Clermont v Bordeaux
Montpellier v Stade Français
Pau v Toulouse
Racing v Grenoble
Toulon v La Rochelle

GK IPA Championship

Bedford v Moseley
Ealing v London Scottish
Jersey v Cornish Pirates

Principality Premiership

Aberavon v Bedwas
Carmarthen Quins v Neath
Cross Keys v Cardiff
Ebbw Vale v Newport
Llanedeyrn v Llanelli
Pontypridd v Bridgend

Ulster Bank League 1A

Galwegians v Cork Con
Garryowen v Ballynahinch
Lansdowne v Young Munster

BT Premiership

Ayr v Melrose
Boroughmuir v Currie
Glasgow Hawks v Gala
Hawick v Stirling County
Selkirk v Heriot's

SUN 13 SEP

Guinness Pro12

Ospreys v Munster (2.30)

TV Live on S4C

West Country Challenge Cup

Gloucester v Bath (3pm,
Memorial Stadium, Bristol)

GK IPA Championship

London Welsh v Bristol (3)

TV Live on Sky Sports 3

Nottingham v Doncaster

Rotherham v Yorkshire

Carnegie

Ulster Bank**League 1A**

Clontarf v

Old Belvedere

Young Munster

v Garryowen

SAT 19 SEP

West Country**Challenge Cup**

Exeter v Bath (3pm)

Kings of the North

Leicester v Newcastle (3pm)

GK IPA Championship

Doncaster v Jersey

London Scottish v Bedford

Moseley v London Welsh

Principality Premiership

Bedwas v Cross Keys

Bridgend v Llanedeyrn

Carmarthen v Aberavon

Ebbw Vale v Neath

Llanelli v Cardiff

Newport v Pontypridd

Ulster Bank League 1A

Ballynahinch v UCD

Cork Con v Lansdowne

Terenure Coll v Galwegians

BT Premiership

Currie v Selkirk

Gala v Ayr

Heriot's v Hawick

Melrose v Boroughmuir

Stirling County v Hawks

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SUN 20 SEP

GK IPA**Championship**

Bristol v Nottingham
Cornish Pirates v Rotherham
Yorkshire Carnegie v Ealing

THU 24 SEP

Friendly Match

England v Welsh Legends

(7.45pm, Stoop)

TV Live on Sky Sports 2

FRI 25 SEP

Kings of the North

Newcastle v Leicester (8pm)

The Cunningham/**Duncombe Series**

Harlequins v Lon Irish (7.45)

Ulster Bank League 1A

Lansdowne v Terenure Coll

SAT 26 SEP

West Country Challenge Cup

Bath v Gloucester (5.45pm)

Friendly Matches

Saracens v Northampton (2)

Worcester v Wasps (3)

GK IPA Championship

Ealing v Cornish Pirates

Jersey v Bristol

London Welsh v Bedford

Rotherham v Doncaster

Yorkshire Carnegie v

London Scottish

Principality Premiership

Aberavon v Bridgend

Cross Keys v Llanelli

Llanedeyrn v Ebbw Vale

Neath v Cardiff



PICS: BETTY IMAGES & AMPRO

▲ Onwards and upwards Last season's Guinness Pro12 finalists will face off again next month

Newport v Bedwas

Pontypridd v Carmarthen

Ulster Bank League 1A

Clontarf v Ballynahinch

Garryowen v Cork Con

Old Belvedere v Galwegians

UCD v Young Munster

BT Premiership

Ayr v Stirling County

Boroughmuir v Selkirk

Glasgow Hawks v Heriot's

Hawick v Currie

Melrose v Gala

SUN 27 SEP

GK IPA Championship

Nottingham v Moseley

FRI 2 OCT

Guinness Pro12

Edinburgh v Ospreys (6)

TV Live on BBC Wales

Munster v Glasgow (6)

TV Live on Sky Sports 2

Ulster v Treviso (6.05)

TV Live on BBC NI

Kings of the North

Sale v Newcastle (8)

The Cunningham/**Duncombe Series**

Lon Irish v Harlequins (7.45)

SAT 3 OCT

Guinness Pro12

Leinster v Dragons (2.30)

Connacht v Cardiff Blues (5)

West Country Challenge Cup

Gloucester v Exeter (3pm,

Memorial Stadium, Bristol)

Friendly Match

Saracens v Worcester (1)

GK IPA Championship

Bedford v Nottingham

Doncaster v Ealing

London Scottish v Lon Welsh

Moseley v Jersey

Principality Premiership

Aberavon v Newport

Bedwas v Neath

Cross Keys v Bridgend

Ebbw Vale v Cardiff

Llanelli v Carmarthen

Pontypridd v Llanedeyrn

Ulster Bank League 1A

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Young Munster v Clontarf

BT Premiership

Currie v Glasgow Hawks

Gala v Boroughmuir

Heriot's v Ayr

Selkirk v Hawick

Stirling County v Melrose

SUN 4 OCT

Guinness Pro12

Zebre v Scarlets (1pm)

TV Live on S4C

Friendly Match

Wasps v Northampton (3)

GK IPA Championship

Bristol v Rotherham

C Pirates v Yorkshire Carn

● All kick-offs UK & Ireland.
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RWC 2015 FIXTURES

ALL
THE
DATES

FRI 18 SEP

Pool A **England v Fiji**
(8pm, Twickenham)

SAT 19 SEP

Pool C **Tonga v Georgia**
(noon, Kingsholm)

Pool D **Ireland v Canada**
(2.30pm, Millennium Stadium)

Pool B **South Africa v Japan**
(4.45pm, Brighton Comm Stad)

Pool D **France v Italy**
(8pm, Twickenham)

SUN 20 SEP

Pool B **Samoa v USA**
(noon, Brighton Comm Stad)

Pool A **Wales v Uruguay**
(2.30pm, Millennium Stadium)

Pool C **NZ v Argentina**
(4.45pm, Wembley)

WED 23 SEP

Pool B **Scotland v Japan**
(2.30pm, Kingsholm)

Pool A **Australia v Fiji**
(4.45pm, Millennium Stadium)

Pool D **France v Romania**
(8pm, Olympic Stadium)

THU 24 SEP

Pool C **New Zealand v Namibia**
(8pm, Olympic Stadium)

FRI 25 SEP

Pool C **Argentina v Georgia**
(4.45pm, Kingsholm)

SAT 26 SEP

Pool D **Italy v Canada**
(2.30pm, Elland Road)

Pool B **South Africa v Samoa**
(4.45pm, Villa Park)

Pool A **England v Wales**
(8pm, Twickenham)

SUN 27 SEP

Pool A **Australia v Uruguay**
(noon, Villa Park)

Pool B **Scotland v USA**
(2.30pm, Elland Road)

Pool D **Ireland v Romania**
(4.45pm, Wembley)

TUE 29 SEP

Pool C **Tonga v Namibia**
(4.45pm, Sandy Park)

THU 1 OCT

Pool A **Wales v Fiji**
(4.45pm, Millennium Stadium)

Pool D **France v Canada**
(8pm, Stadium MK)

FRI 2 OCT

Pool C **New Zealand v Georgia**
(8pm, Millennium Stadium)



SAT 3 OCT

Pool B **Samoa v Japan**
(2.30pm, Stadium MK)

Pool B **South Africa v Scotland**
(4.45pm, St James' Park)

Pool A **England v Australia**
(8pm, Twickenham)

SUN 4 OCT

Pool C **Argentina v Tonga**
(2.30pm, Leicester City Stad)

Pool D **Ireland v Italy**
(4.45pm, Olympic Stadium)

TUE 6 OCT

Pool D **Canada v Romania**
(4.45pm, Leicester City Stad)

Pool A **Fiji v Uruguay**
(8pm, Stadium MK)

WED 7 OCT

Pool B **South Africa v USA**
(4.45pm, Olympic Stadium)

Pool C **Namibia v Georgia**
(8pm, Sandy Park)

FRI 9 OCT

Pool C **New Zealand v Tonga**
(8pm, St James' Park)

SAT 10 OCT

Pool B **Samoa v Scotland**
(2.30pm, St James' Park)

Pool A **Australia v Wales**
(4.45pm, Twickenham)

Pool A **England v Uruguay**
(8pm, Manchester City Stad)

SUN 11 OCT

Pool C **Argentina v Namibia**
(noon, Leicester City Stadium)

Pool D **Italy v Romania**
(2.30pm, Sandy Park)

Pool D **France v Ireland**
(4.45pm, Millennium Stadium)

Pool B **USA v Japan**
(8pm, Kingsholm)

SAT 17 OCT

QF1 Winner Pool B v Runner-up
Pool A (4pm, Twickenham)

QF2 Winner Pool C v Runner-up
Pool D (8pm, Millennium Stad)

SUN 18 OCT

QF3 Winner Pool D v Runner-up
Pool C (1pm, Millennium Stad)

QF4 Winner Pool A v Runner-up
Pool B (4pm, Twickenham)

SAT 24 OCT

SF1 Winner QF1 v Winner QF2
(4pm, Twickenham)

SUN 25 OCT

SF2 Winner QF3 v Winner QF4
(4pm, Twickenham)

FRI 30 OCT

Bronze final
(8pm, Olympic Stadium)

SAT 31 OCT

Final (4pm, Twickenham)



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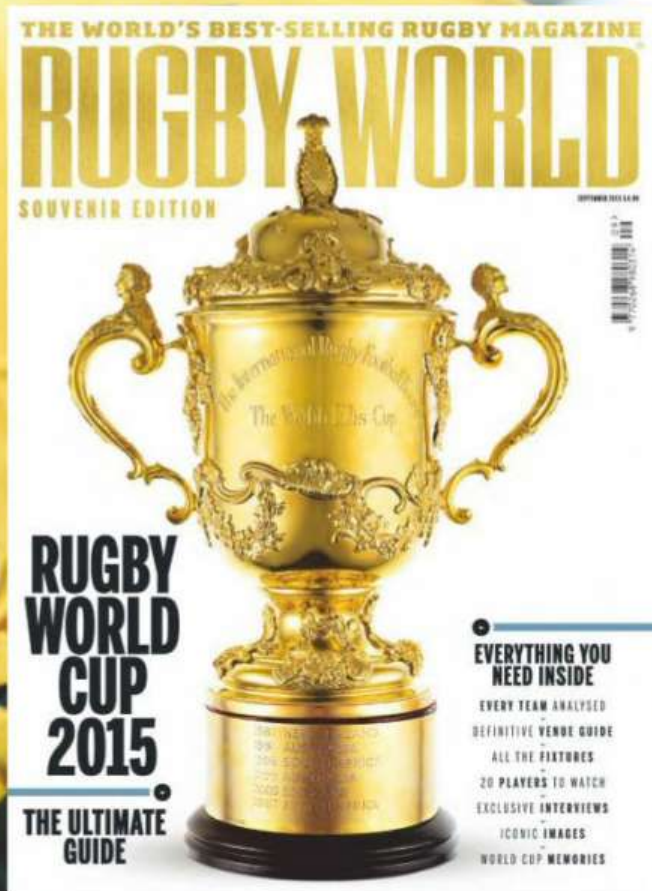
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NILI LATU

The flanker points to a bright future for Tonga. By RW's Sarah Mockford

WE WANT to win the World Cup," says Tonga captain Nili Latu. "We've not come here to make up the numbers, or just win one or two games, or get to the quarter-finals. We've set the target really high and we realise it's set high, but we've got our eye on the cup. That's what we're here for."

This isn't said for effect but with conviction. There is belief and determination in his voice – just as there is in the Tonga squad. And Latu isn't afraid to say what he thinks, even if it means missing a World Cup, as it did back in 2011.

Latu was one of the standout performers of Tonga's 2007 World Cup campaign, leading from the front with his uncompromising hits and powerful carries, so there was a sense of shock when the flanker was omitted from the national squad four years later. This wasn't because of injury or loss of form, it was because he had pushed for better conditions for the players. Even though Isitolo Maka picked Latu in his original RWC 2011 squad, the then coach was later overruled by the Tonga Rugby Union (TRU) and one official, chairman Bob Tuckey, even resigned over the furore. Still, Latu has no regrets about taking a stand.

"There was a lot of misunderstanding between the management and me and the board," he explains. "I spoke out about player payment and the reimbursing of stuff, and the board kicked me out for speaking out. The coach called me back in 2011 and I worked with the team, but they (the board) wanted me to apologise for what I'd done. I'd only regret it if I was wrong, but it's what was needed. At that moment I spoke the truth and I'm really glad I stood up for the boys. It's something I feel any leader would do for their team."

Tonga, with Latu back as captain and former star Epi Taione as TRU president, are in a better place now. They finished third in the Pacific Nations Cup, winning three of their four games, and enjoyed a two-week training camp at Cranleigh School in Surrey, secured with the help of producers of the *Pacific Warriors* film, prior to the World Cup. There is a lot of experience in the squad, the likes of Soane Tonga'uuiha, Hale T-Pole, Siale Piutau and Aleki Lutui alongside Latu, but there are a few fresh faces too, Viliame Tahitu'a, Telusa Veainu and Sosefo Ma'ake all making their Test debuts this year.

"There's a really good balance of guys," says Latu. "We've got a lot of exciting backs and a lot of youth coming through. A few of us have been around for a long time and we've got a lot of experienced forwards,



but the younger generation are pushing us as well. It's really positive at the moment. What we achieved in the PNC was positive too."

Tonga open their campaign against Georgia at Kingsholm, where Latu scored a try in the 40-12 win over the USA last year, while he knows several All Blacks – their final pool opponents – from his time playing in New Zealand. As for their game against Namibia in Exeter, it will be refereed by Glen Jackson – a former team-mate of Latu's at Bay of Plenty,

where he was also coached by Joe Schmidt and Vern Cotter. So there will be plenty of familiar faces and sights for Latu during this tournament.

There's no doubt Tonga have made an impact in the last two World Cups, both with their tackles and their results – remember that they stunned France 19-14 in 2011. Latu wants to draw on that same spirit this time around. "The 2007 tournament is one of the best memories of my rugby career. We were the underdogs but worked hard and when you sit back afterwards you realise the opportunity was there. It was a group of men from Tonga dedicating their whole life to that tournament. It was the same in 2011, and we want to put it together this time."

Whenever Tonga's World Cup campaign comes to an end, Latu will be sticking around in England as he has signed for Newcastle. Having spent the previous eight years playing for NEC Green Rockets in Japan, the weather could prove to be a shock to the system, especially as the 33-year-old was complaining about the cold in Surrey in August! So why the Falcons?

"It was just seeing their history. A lot of Polynesian boys have played for Newcastle and I thought if they all wanted to go and play in Newcastle it must be a good club. I'd heard good things about it and I want to see what all the fuss is about."

He may have signed the contract but he hasn't met the club's director of rugby Dean Richards or many of the players yet. However, with several Tongans and Samoans already in the Falcons squad, guys like Alesana Tuilagi, Sinoti Sinoti and Uili Kolo'ofai, it shouldn't take him long to feel at home.

Looking to the future, Latu doesn't see his playing days lasting long enough for him to go to another World Cup and plans to move into coaching once he retires; he's already given it a try in San Francisco. As he says: "I'm a simple guy – it's rugby, sleep, eat."

A simple guy with huge ambitions. **RW**

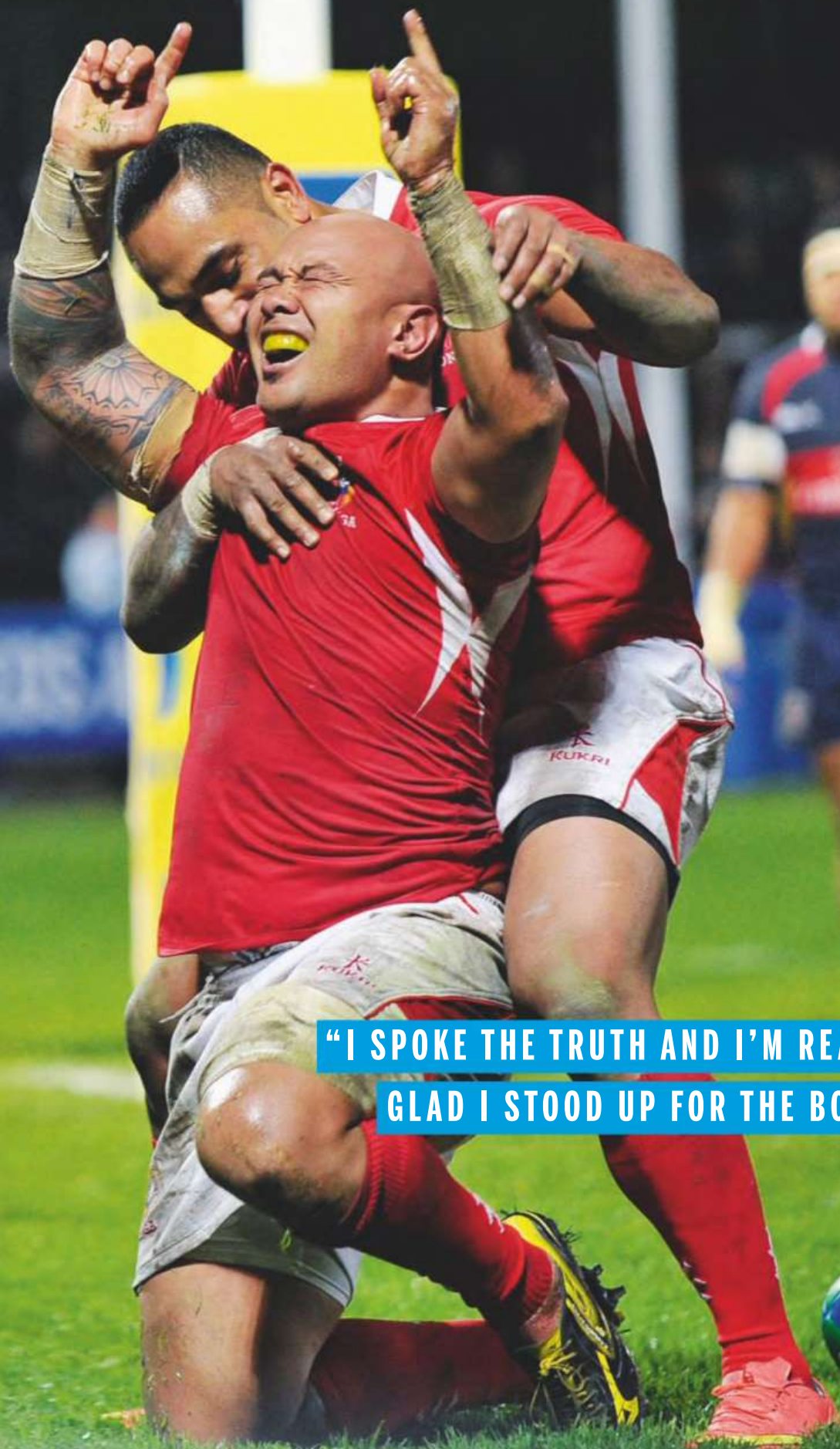
FACT FILE

Age 33 (19 Feb 1982)
Born Tongatapu
Club Newcastle
Position Openside
Height 6ft
Weight 15st 12lb
Tonga caps 39 (4T, 1P)
Pacific Islands caps Six

MY TOP 3 OPPONENTS

Richie McCaw
 "One of the best, if not the best, flankers I've come across."
Hale T-Pole
 "Has a great heart and fight in him."
Ma'a Nonu
 "I grew up with him and he's a special guy."





**"I SPOKE THE TRUTH AND I'M REALLY
GLAD I STOOD UP FOR THE BOYS"**



**“WE HAVE SEVERAL BACKS CAPABLE OF
WINNING MATCHES WITH A MOMENT OF GENIUS”**

ROSS FORD

The veteran hooker explains why Scotland are upbeat about RWC 2015

A S ROSS FORD goes into his third World Cup, the hooker looks forward to a tournament in which Scotland hope to confound their status as Six Nations wooden spoon holders in a pool featuring South Africa, Samoa, Japan and USA.

This Scotland squad is right up there with any I've been involved with. The Six Nations was tough but it's a new season and we're all feeling upbeat. It's exciting to see everyone improving. There is more strength in depth in many positions than we've had before and we have several exciting backs capable of winning matches with a moment of genius. **I love the high-tempo game our coach Vern Cotter likes to play.** It's hard work but when you see the rewards – like line breaks and space opening up to run into – it's all worthwhile. That happened during the autumn Tests and a little bit in the Six Nations, but we became over-eager and started forcing things instead of working through the phases and believing the chance would appear if we kept to that system. It was a painful process. Hopefully we've learnt the lesson that we have to try things but that forced offloads can kill us.

Samoa put the All Blacks under huge pressure in July. I only saw the last 20 minutes but Samoa were impressive in defence and dangerous on the counter. They were in it to the end, and spending so long together means they're capable of phenomenal performances in these tournaments. In fact, you expect it from them.

I love the Springboks' physicality. They can move the ball about but pride themselves on their go-forward, on being confrontational no matter who is in front of them, so we know what to expect. But I've beaten South Africa with Scotland and the Lions, so I know we can do it.

Japan and the USA are both targeting us as a potential upset. We need the right balance between respecting our opponents and believing in ourselves. The USA are big men, strong and confrontational at the breakdown. As for Japan, it took us a while to break them down at Murrayfield in 2013 but we won well, even though they don't make many errors.

Success at this World Cup means getting to the knockout stages, so that we give ourselves the best possible chance. Playing Samoa and South Africa in Newcastle will help us because it's just over the border from places like my home town of Kelso; it's almost a home from home.

The best day of my career was captaining Scotland



FACT FILE

Age 31 (23 April 1984)
Born Edinburgh
Club Edinburgh
Position Hooker
Height 6ft 1in
Weight 17st 11lb
Scotland caps 87
Lions caps One
Test points Ten (2T)

MY TOP 3s

Stadiums

BT Murrayfield
 Millennium Stadium
 Stade de France

Dishes

Chicken Peking
 Chicken dhansak
 Fajitas (right)

Places visited

Mexico
 Aruba
 Portugal

when we beat Australia on the 2012 tour.

To lead a team that beat Australia, Samoa and Fiji in such testing weather was a highlight.

The worst day was also in 2012. It's when we lost in Italy in the Six Nations, which meant that I'd captained Scotland to a wooden spoon.

We're going in the right direction at Edinburgh. Our coach Alan Solomons brought it back to basics, focusing on fitness, defence and set-piece. We began to build confidence by seeing the results that come

from continuity. Guys like centre Matt Scott have flourished, and Alan has also brought in some talented boys, like Cornell du Preez, who's abrasive and has the X-factor. Alan's system is simple but we are heading in the right direction and a top-six place must be our absolute minimum this season.

My Edinburgh and Scotland coaches are two very different characters. But they both have a real will to win. Alan is very direct and in your face while Vern is less forthcoming but will still tell you how it is when you need it. The way they approach the game differs and you can see that in the way their teams play. Edinburgh's way is very confrontational; Scotland use slightly defter touches and have a dynamic energy Edinburgh aspire to. It's a choice between running through the brick wall or running around it.

I love watching the tactics on the Tour de France.

I have a mountain bike and a road bike and head out whenever I've got a free moment. If it's a nice day I'll be out on the road, Lycra'd up to the hilt, but if it's miserable I'll go out on my mountain bike. I live in Stow in the Borders, so I've got the choice of the quiet back roads or the hill tracks at Innerleithen. One of the scariest things I've seen on a mountain bike was Gary Armstrong going over the corners instead of around them on the way down. Straight over, route one. He rides a mountain bike like he played rugby. **My wee boy keeps me busy most of the time.** Jake is almost three and if I had a tenth of his energy I'd be flying around everywhere. It's unbelievable, he's just non-stop all the time. He's a handful but it's fun!

I don't see why this should be my last World Cup. I never say never, it just depends on how I'm playing by 2019. I'm 31 but still enjoying my rugby.

I always remember how lucky I am to represent Scotland. I'm pushing towards 100 caps but that's not a big thing for me – winning something with both Edinburgh and Scotland is my big driving force. **RFW**



CHRIS WYLES

The US Eagles captain is like a kid in a candy store, says RW's Alan Pearey



ALL remember it, Brits especially: the 'Super Saturday' on 4 August 2012 when Mo Farah, Jessica Ennis and Greg Rutherford won Olympic gold

in the space of 46 minutes at the London Games. Lapping up the vibe in the Olympic Stadium that evening was Chris Wyles, Saracens' anglicised American. "It was an incredible atmosphere and an incredible day," he says. "The whole country, the city, was right behind the Olympics and I remember that vividly. I'm hoping this World Cup will emulate that."

"You talk about big events, games you can't wait to play in, and US v South Africa at the Olympic Stadium is one of them. It will be an amazing event. I can't wait."

Wyles uses words like 'incredible' and 'amazing' a lot in conversation and it's easy to see why because his career, and life generally, keeps getting better and better. A Premiership champion with Saracens last season after scoring 13 tries, he married beauty writer Amy, his sweetheart from Haileybury days, this summer, whilst also assuming the USA captaincy from Todd Clever, who was dropped for repeatedly missing training.

Clever's behaviour is the only off-limits subject for Wyles, who is far happier reminiscing about past World Cup adventures, which began for him at France 2007. Remarkably, after a miserable season at Northampton that ended in relegation, he had been about to quit rugby.

"I was just out of university and it was my first season in a pro club. Contemporaries were working in London and that was exciting too, so I seriously contemplated giving up the game. But USA got in touch with me and that reignited my passion for the sport."

After three caps on the wing that summer, Wyles was pitched in against England in Lens at full-back, where he has won all but six of his 49 USA caps (he has even played at flanker, getting ten minutes there in Fiji).

"France as my first World Cup was pretty special. It was an amazing event and everyone remembers our game against South Africa because of the great try by Taki (Takudzwa Ngwenya) when he went round Bryan Habana. I scored a try in that game too but no one remembers it! As an experience it was so exciting. I watched all the games, not just teams in our pool. In 2011 I had a more experienced mindset, but still every time you play in a World Cup the excitement hits you."

On the eve of his 32nd birthday, Wyles is now a senior figure on the world stage. Already America's most-capped full-back, he will soon overtake Paul Emerick's 53-cap



record for a back. The Eagles have won just three matches in six World Cups but this year brings cause for optimism because, as well as the Springboks and Scotland, they face two Pacific Nations Cup rivals in Samoa and Japan, the latter a team they beat in July.

"The Japan game looks like our best chance of winning but they're ranked above us and under Eddie Jones have become a very good team," Wyles says. "We have a talented squad with a lot of overseas players, like Samu Manoa

and Blaine Scully. So we're not coming to England to make up the numbers. Our mindset has to be that we are here to compete, we are well prepared, we have great athletes and we will take up the challenge."

Lack of time as a group is USA's biggest obstacle, as shown when they came together on the Monday before last year's All Blacks Test in Chicago, amateur mixing with rugby pro. The situation will only change if the States launch a pro league but initial attempts have stalled. Leicester had planned a groundbreaking fixture in Philadelphia last month but were forced to cancel after USA Rugby refused to sanction the game.

"There's been a lot of talk about USA being a sleeping giant and people being interested in the market; the Leicester game is a case in point. A lot of the discussions about a pro league have been about getting the money and about the geography because the country is so big, and about getting top coaching. It all comes down to money and who will step out there and make it happen."

"There is movement in USA Rugby, who are hoping a pro league will be possible within a couple of years. It sounds promising but then it has sounded promising year after year. Doing it is difficult."

Until then, the USA's 15s side will play second fiddle to the country's sevens team, which won this year's London Sevens and booked a spot at Rio 2016 after a super-charged qualifying event in North Carolina. Wyles competed in the qualifier and would love to stay involved. "I've spoken to (sevens coach) Mike Friday and there's an opportunity for me to compete for a spot in Rio. Obviously I'd most likely miss the world series but I could potentially come in late. My goal at the moment is to compete for a spot in Rio."

Premiership champion, Captain America, a 'home' World Cup, potential Olympian: Wyles must pinch himself to think how far he's come since emigrating from Pennsylvania to England at 12. "It's been one of my favourite years," he says. That's easy to believe. **RW**

FACT FILE

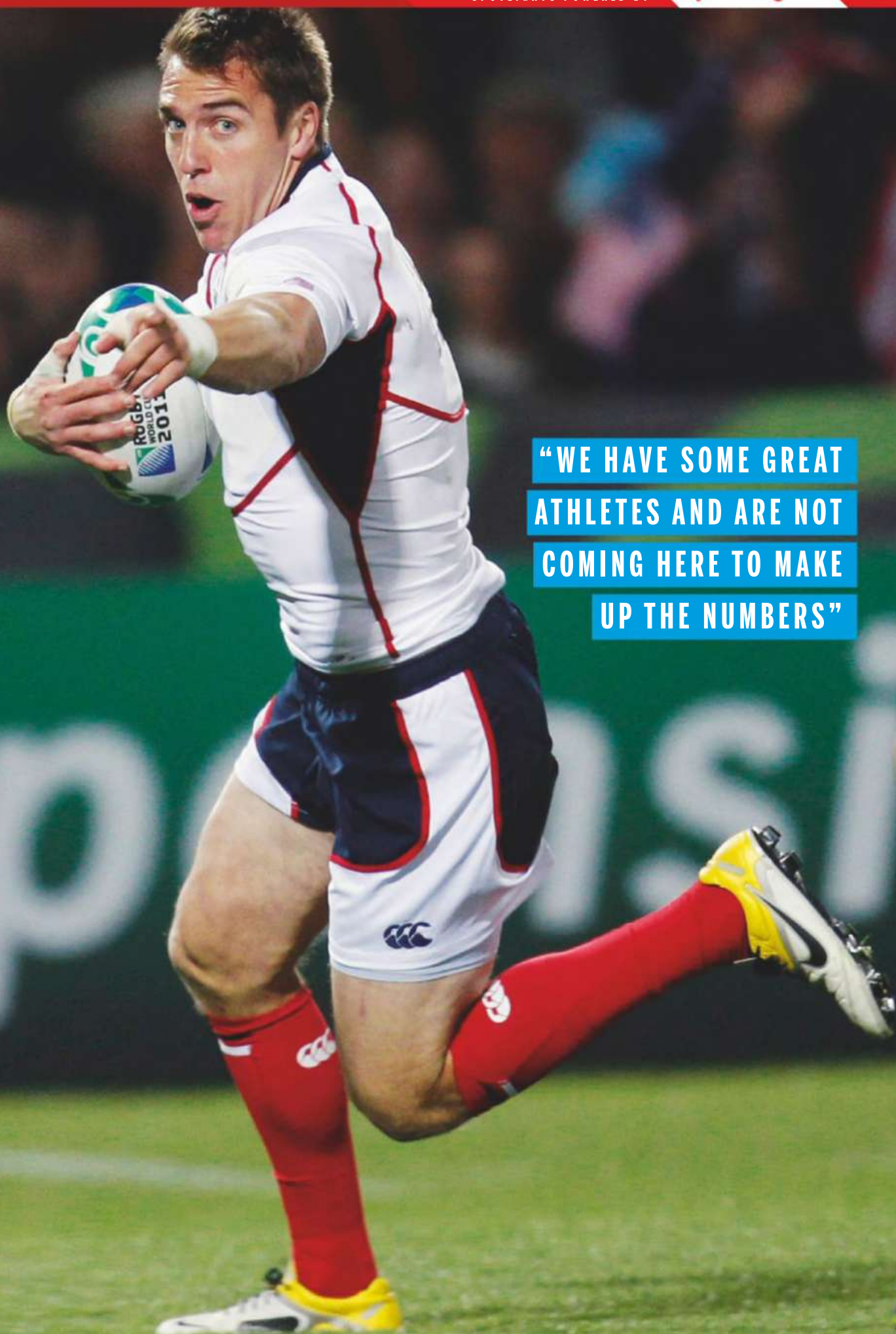
Age 31 (13 Sept 1983)
Born Stamford, Connecticut
Club Saracens
Position Full-back
Height 6ft
Weight 14st 11lb
USA caps 49 (14T, 23C, 31P, 1DG)
Twitter @ChrisWyles

MY TOP 3 SPORTSMEN

Jonny Wilkinson
 "Such a hard worker who lays everything on the line."
Scottie Pippen
 "Amazing player yet didn't get the limelight at Chicago Bulls."
Pele

"So much flair. Epitomises the Brazilian style."





**“WE HAVE SOME GREAT
ATHLETES AND ARE NOT
COMING HERE TO MAKE
UP THE NUMBERS”**



**“THE WAY WE PLAY REFLECTS OUR
PERSONALITIES AND WE LIKE TO HAVE
REGGAE MUSIC PLAYING AT TRAINING”**

JOSH MATAVESI

The Fiji fly-half explains how Facebook kicked off his international career

JOSH MATAVESI'S chuckle is a regular feature of his patter and suggests that he will enjoy every minute of this World Cup, whatever happens. He's most certainly a glass half-full person, even when in a pool with Australia, England and Wales. The Fiji fly-half talks family, fun and the future...

My dad played for Fiji. That's pretty much the reason why I was born. My dad flew over with the Fiji Barbarians team in the mid-1980s, ended up staying here, played for Camborne and met my mum. **My brothers and I are really competitive.** There's three of us and on car journeys as kids we'd argue over who had the most trees on each side of the car! Dad would take us everywhere for rugby in a yellow van. **I used to be quite chubby.** I started playing rugby at four and played flanker or No 8. I even had a stint at hooker. My body didn't appreciate it! It's nicer in the backs, seeing the boys rucking each other and mauling. **I played everything as a kid.** Netball, cricket, tennis, basketball, rugby. We were two minutes from the beach and there was a rugby pitch just down the road. I'm grateful we had all that – it was a cool place to grow up. **My first trip to Fiji was a really good experience.** We went on a family holiday for four weeks when I was ten. It was great to see where Dad was from and meet family. **I always wanted to be a rugby player.** I wasn't very academic so I stayed positive and at about 14 it became a genuine option. I went to Truro College, which was linked to Exeter, and I signed a contract with them. I had two good years there as Exeter were promoted to the Premiership, then I moved to Paris to join Racing before coming back to join Worcester and then the Ospreys. **I've settled at the Ospreys.** I played 29 games for them last season and that's what I needed to be consistent. It's brought my game on and I'm happy with my rugby. Alun Wyn Jones is one of the best players I've played with and I've learnt a lot from him. And I've been Rhys Webb's and Dan Biggar's battering ram! **Nicky Little asked me if I'd want to play for Fiji on Facebook.** He'd come to play against Cornish Pirates for Saracens and we got to know each other. Out of the blue he emailed to give me the details of then Fiji coach Mike Brewer. All my life I'd tried to play for England but there was no pathway, so I thought I'd do it. Two weeks later I was on the field against Scotland (in 2009). **I'm really proud to represent Fiji.** It's not where I was born but it's where my dad was born and I'm happy



FACT FILE

Age 24 (5 Oct 1990)
Born Camborne
Region Ospreys
Position Centre/fly-half
Height 6ft 1in
Weight 17st 8lb
Fiji caps 13
Points 40 (1T, 10C, 5P)
Twitter @theflyingfijian

MY TOP 3s

Childhood heroes

My dad
 Waisale Serevi
 The Rock
TV shows
 Come Dine With Me
 Fresh Prince of Bel Air
 Entourage

Cheat food

KFC/McDonald's
 Dairy Milk
 Pasty

with my choice. Dad had always said I should play for England, but when he told his family that I was playing for Fiji he was in tears.

People don't play for Fiji for money.

Booking my flights to Fiji before the World Cup wasn't nice on my credit card! But at the end of the day it's about the memories we'll make in September and October.

I missed out on the opportunity of a lifetime in 2011. I was struggling to find a club, my missus was pregnant and when I

joined Racing it was in my contract (that he wouldn't play for Fiji). I really regret it and it's one thing I wish I could take back. But you learn from those mistakes.


The way we play reflects our personalities. We're chilled and try to keep it as raw as possible, but there are a lot of players overseas now so they bring experience and help with structure and the set-piece.

Niko Matawalu keeps the boys entertained. He dances on the bus. We also like to have reggae playing on a boom box at training. We had a training session against Georgia once and had Bob Marley blaring out while we warmed up. They looked at us strangely but we flicked the switch when we trained against them.

It's wrong to be negative going into the World Cup. We've obviously got a tough group but we don't just want to beat Uruguay – we want to beat England first up, then Australia and Wales. I don't see why we can't beat them. We've had a long time together before the World Cup – the longest ever – so we're prepared.

It's hard being away from my family. I'm very much a family guy and have two young daughters: Lei'lana is three and Masina was born in May. I've been on Skype all the time! My partner, Anna, has been great. It's difficult but this is the pinnacle of my career.

My dad became paralysed in 2014. He collapsed in the bathroom one morning and was rushed to the hospital. He had a cyst in his spinal cord and they needed to take it out but that left him paralysed. He's still a really positive guy. We held a charity day at Camborne in the summer to raise funds for new equipment for where he is now (Marie Therese House in Hayle) because they've been great for Dad. **I'm Cornish.** People will say, "You're from England" and I'll say, "No, I'm Cornish." I like to show people

that a normal kid from Camborne can make it. **I'd like to work with kids who've had it rough when I stop playing.** I'm passionate about that and maybe I'll go into coaching, helping kids from all areas of life. 



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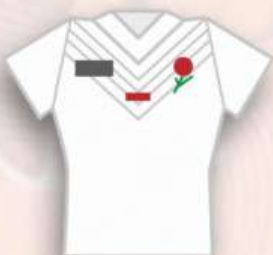
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WORDS: STUART BARNES MAIN PIC: JAMES CROMBIE/INPHO

GEORGE FORD COULD BE ENGLAND FLY-HALF FOR THE NEXT DECADE”

Former Test fly-half Stuart Barnes analyses the Bath man's game and explains why he is the only choice to wear the No 10 jersey at the World Cup



George Ford 10th Cap 11
England v Scotland
10th MARCH 2015

G

GEORGE FORD is potentially the finest English fly-half of the professional age. He may not have the cold-eyed precision of Jonny Wilkinson in front of goal, or the sheer thunder in the tackle, but the 22-year-old is

blessed with so many other assets that he could be England's No 10 for the next decade.

This is a bold claim considering his schoolboy friend and now rival Owen Farrell finished his disappointing season with the Man of the Match award in the Aviva Premiership final as Saracens beat Ford's Bath. But two points need to be made here.

Firstly, as someone who has awarded hundreds of Man of the Match awards from the commentary box for Sky, I have never failed to be astonished at the significance that is bestowed courtesy of the subjective decision of a former player.

The award is one man's view; it does not translate into unarguable fact. The fact is that Farrell had an excellent 80 minutes and Ford had a fabulous season – which brings us to the second point. Farrell is a fine player. With him as fly-half England could go close this autumn. With Ford, however, England might just win the whole thing.

What is it that sets Ford apart from Farrell?

It's not some silly notion that he plays the game with dash and romance. Simply because Ford has a sublime style to his game does not make him some hair-brained cavalier out for an afternoon of entertainment. It is an



The contenders
Ford and Farrell in training

error that critics seem incapable of correcting. Style and substance can go together. So it does with Ford.

An analysis of his impact on junior rugby reveals just what a winner the Bath fly-half is. He had an almost unbelievable record before turning professional. In 2011, the year he was adjudged to be the IRB Junior Player of the Year, he lost his first match as part of an England team (to New Zealand in the U20 World Cup final) since 2008, when he was an U16 star.

There was no greater winner in the junior ranks, yet the fact that he plays his game with his head rather than his heart has led a few unthinking souls to see him as a 'luxury item'. Ford will never tackle with the power of Wilkinson and he won't go looking for the aggro as Farrell does, but that is all to the positive, not the detriment, of the Bath star.

It's not that he shirks defensive duties, far from it – he tackles his weight and blocks his defensive channel –



King of the castle
Ford dictates Bath's play

but Ford's first priority is to shape the team with the ball in hand. That is the time-honoured duty of the best fly-halves. Wilkinson was a defensive freak but the game soon settled back into a sport where the best No 10s were the playmakers.

For most of the past decade, Daniel Carter has glided around the planet, making tackles when he must, yet primarily conducting games with his rugby brain. Ford is such a player. England have not seen his like in a long time. Farrell is happiest as part of the machine, but Ford is the vital cog and one capable of making the machine run smooth enough to trouble any team on the planet.

This is what England must do to win the World Cup. Or so the thinking of the management suggests. On the New Zealand tour of 2014, I was stunned to see England take on the All Blacks with the breadth of their ambition. England ran out of steam; New Zealand ran away with the series. Yet a valuable lesson was learnt.

For much of their Test-match history, England have growled their way around the world trying to bully and intimidate the opposition with the power of their pack, Europe's South Africa if you like. The management believes such a philosophy has been left behind and that only by playing positive rugby and scoring tries can England beat the All Blacks and the best of the rest.

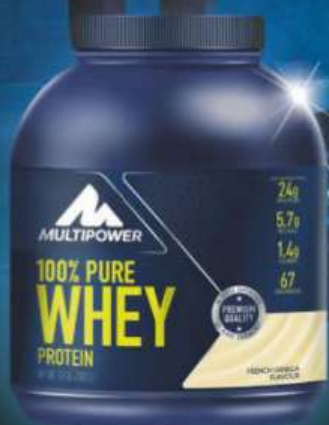
Whether they are right or wrong is still open for debate (as is whether they will tighten their game should they meet New Zealand at some stage during →

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FARRELL IS HAPPIEST AS PART OF A MACHINE BUT FORD IS THE VITAL COG”

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→ the World Cup) but the catalyst for such a style is indisputable. England have a side full of athletes. They will not miss out on the Webb Ellis Cup for want of physical prowess. But an adventurous style of attacking rugby requires subtlety as well as the waves of hard running at which so many former England sides have excelled.

Ford, with his timing of a pass, is the master of the creative game. He is synchronised to the frightening footwork of his club colleague Jonathan Joseph in a way that magnifies the threat of the outside-centre. In both club and country colours, they have combined to staggering success. Against Toulouse away and France at home, they were nearly unstoppable.

Joseph will not match his achievements if he plays outside the belligerence of the Saracens midfield duo of Farrell and Brad Barritt, whereas England's defence can function with Barritt between the Bath men. On individual form and team balance, the case for Ford is an overwhelming one.

There is no finer passer of the ball in the game at the moment and while there may be a few fly-halves, such as Beauden Barrett, with an extra metre of pace, Ford is fleet of foot and lightning of mind. His running game is secondary to his distribution but it is a live enough



threat to force teams to mark him carefully. If they obsess with England's wider pace, he will thread his way through the defence. If they delay because of his sneaky acceleration, Joseph is gone like a will o' the wisp.

It was his brilliant running game that ignited England's Six Nations season. True, on the back foot in Ireland he played it too flat, too ambitious in a way Farrell would not but, remember, this was only his second season of Test rugby. Give me a fly-half with the guts to make a mistake rather than one afraid to poke his head over the parapet. Ford will have learnt a crucial lesson in Dublin, one that he is far too smart to forget.

One of the 'truisms' I've heard since then is that Ford – last season's Premiership Player of the Year (right) – lacks the kicking game to control Test rugby.

This is another criticism 'romantics' receive. Because he has proved a class act with ball in hand, it went that the other side of his game had to be weaker. It takes a fair degree of stupidity to subscribe to such a viewpoint, not to mention a memory bordering on the non-existent.

After Farrell was finally relieved of his starting place post-South Africa in the



autumn of 2014, Ford turned England's fortunes with the combination of brain and boot. I took a bit of stick for not making him Man of the Match against Samoa, when I felt he was too caught up in England's poorly predicated attacking game from their own half. One week later, he was fine-tuned and played the percentages to perfection against Australia. The actual quality of his kicking from hand was below his best but the decision-making was a delight to behold in the then 21-year-old; ah, forget the age, it was a delight, full stop.

As for the technique, the previous season (2013-14) his development centred on the tactical kicking side of his game. At times he punted with such a rhythm for Bath that he tended to overdo it, something any young player will do when the muse is with him. One season he kicked beautifully; the next he ran the show. It is the ideal learning curve that sets him up to merge his game come the World Cup.

The most contentious area of his game has been goalkicking. It is impossible to dispute that the season before last he was capable of the odd aberration that was so bad from the tee that it had to be a case of something psychological, because his kicking is usually so good.

A season of Six Nations rugby has done wonders for this early onset of nerves. He may not have Farrell's distance but his capacity to create tries more than compensates. Against France, when every point counted, he kicked well and, in the Premiership final, he was immaculate after Sarries built an early lead, leaving each and every kick a pressure one.

If England want to play with ambition, there is no other contender. If they want to close the game you will have heard the arguments for Farrell, but this is befuddled thinking. Ford's vision and tactical acumen give him an edge here as well. There really is only one option as far as the Webb Ellis trophy is concerned. Should Stuart Lancaster revert to his old favourite Farrell, he will do huge damage not just to the prospects of England turning on the style but, far more importantly, English hopes of lifting the trophy in front of their home supporters.

George Ford is not just England's future; he is very much their present. **RW**



30 MINUTES WITH GEORGE FORD

“He woke up with a snake in the bed, sizing him up”



INTERVIEW: ALAN DYMOCK. PICS: ACTION IMAGES & GETTY IMAGES

Do you have any phobias?

Snakes. I heard a story growing up about a friend who had a pet snake. He went to sleep and when he woke up the snake was in bed next to him, sizing him up.

What's your biggest bugbear?

Traffic. Nothing winds me up more.

Do you have any superstitions?

I will always go for a walk on my own for 15 or 20 minutes before a game.

Who are your scariest team-mates?

Sam Burgess and Manu Tuilagi – when he's fit. Both of them are massive and run really hard.

And the funniest team-mate?

Joe Marler with England and Matt Garvey with

Bath. As for practical jokes, Garvey brought a dead squirrel into training once and put it in my bag.

Who do you respect in rugby?

From a No 10's point of view, I love watching Matt Giteau. He's brilliant.

What about goalkickers?

Leigh Halfpenny is the one. He works unbelievably hard. He just seems to have the right temperament.

Ball skills
Sheeran gives
Aussie Rules a go

▲ **Happy clappy**
Ford enjoys England's
2015 victory in Cardiff

If you could be any of your team-mates, who would it be?

Burgess, because of his Aussie achievements. But also because he's an all-round good guy.

Who would be your three dream dinner party guests?

David Beckham, obviously. The Rock, because I always watched wrestling with my brothers, and I'd probably have Ed Sheeran. I'd cook a Thai green curry for them.

Who is the most skilful player you've played with?

JJ (Jonathan Joseph) is way up there. He is always able to make line breaks.

If you could have one superpower, what would it be and why?

Probably flying as I'd miss all the traffic to get from A to B and I'd get to see things from a bird's-eye view.

What's your guilty pleasure?

Wine gums. I can get away with having some before a game, but I have a little stash in the house too.

What's your most embarrassing moment on the pitch?

I took a goalkick against London Irish the other season (in 2013-14). It didn't go high enough and went under the bar, hit the ground and bounced back over the bar. It was a bit of a trick shot but it was a s*** kick!

What's your best memory of playing for England?

Beating Wales on a Friday night in Cardiff in this year's Six Nations. To go there and win like that was massive.

What's the silliest thing you have ever bought?

I bought a lawnmower on the off-chance that I might cut the grass. But I've never used it.

How would you like to be remembered?

As a humble, honest guy who treats people well.

THE FACTS GEORGE FORD

Age 22 (16 March 1993)

Born Oldham, Lancs

Club Bath

Height 5ft 10in

Weight 13st 3lb

Test caps 12

Pts 119 (2T, 20C, 22P, 1DG)

Twitter @George_Fordy

WORDS: ALAN DYMOCK MAIN PIC: PATRICK HAMILTON/AFP

BREAKING IT DOWN

Having had to totally reinvent himself, Scottish coach Richie Gray is now the force behind the Springboks' breakdown



IT'S A horrible question to ask, but what would you do if you were told that the job you had always loved, in your home country, was chips, done, over? We'd all moan like hell, obviously, but after that there would be several different options to take. Not many, you could assume, would pick up a toolbox and head for the shed.

Yet that is exactly what proud Borderer Richie Gray did when his stint coaching for the Scottish Rugby Union was brought to an end. Confined to his own garage, he set about developing what he saw as the perfect machine to help teams practise their rucking.

As his device took off and he began work to reimagine some of the game's most recognisable bits of equipment, he found himself in demand as a specialist breakdown coach. His eventual destination was South Africa and now he faces a showdown with the land of his birth in Pool B of the Rugby World Cup.

Quite a leap but a tale that stands testament to the virtues of graft and a good book of contacts.

A gregarious character with a journeyman's soul, Gray had enjoyed a colourful playing career in Scotland's Caledonia region as a lock. He was a popular and innovative PE teacher, a natural mentor for young players and understandably he was an attractive prospect for the Scottish youth set-up. He had gravitated towards the Border Reivers, a comfortable fit for the man from Galashiels. But the good times there weren't to last as the pro side dissolved in 2007.

"When the Borders went it took me by surprise," says Gray. "We lost a lot of good people, a lot of good rugby folk. I had to redefine myself. Then, two days after leaving, I was asked if I'd like to do some media work for STV. After 12 years of working in rugby I was commentating with Archie Macpherson at a place like Hibs football club. When John Collins, a fellow Gala man, saw me asking questions he almost fell off his chair!"

Forget that football was part of his media life; it had never felt right being away from rugby. The game was in his blood and although he was lost without the sport, he could do something about it. In his words, it came down to the choice of "lie down and die or get up and fight".

He had always had this mentality. Never big enough or heavy enough or fast enough as a player, Gray had to go the extra mile. He took that mentality into his coaching →

➔ and afterwards his time in rugby's wilderness – he was never shy about pursuing fact-finding missions abroad. He left the media and took up a post at Borders College and started thinking about the game, what in it really interested him. The breakdown became the crush on his consciousness. He wanted to know everything about the contact area. So he went on the road again.

"I had always struggled to find the perfect rucking drill," says Gray. "I started talking to guys like Richie Dixon, who used to coach Scotland and was working with Georgia. I spent a year analysing the breakdown and went out to study Clermont Auvergne in France. The heavy forwards kept falling over the ruck. They did very little work on body height. No one mentioned body height. I had some ideas.

"After a year and a half, I was working on a machine (the Collision King – a low-slung, backwards-leaning bag fixed to a sled). I built it in my garage. I had an engineer mate look at the ideas and another mate helped out with the welding. I showed it to Richie who called it 'outstanding' and then Jim Telfer came round. He walked around it for 15 minutes without saying anything and then just said, 'Aye'."

Now Gray had those two on board, he needed a big name he had never met before to give it a final stamp of approval. The Scotland head coach at the time was Andy Robinson, who made the trip to Gala to run an analytical eye over the machine. He demanded four for RWC 2011 there and then – but Gray had only made the one.

From there, things snowballed. Rhino got on board and began production. England and Wales snapped up Collision Kings. Word spread. He was asked to take



Ideas man
Richie Gray invented
a rucking machine

"I STRUGGLED TO FIND THE PERFECT RUCKING DRILL, SO I BUILT A MACHINE IN MY GARAGE"

seminars and talk players through his ideas. Former Springbok back-row and respected coach Rassie Erasmus pulled him to South Africa and it was here that Gray hooked up with Heyneke Meyer, a man who already knew his fair share about Gray.

"My path first crossed with Richie way back in the mid-90s," Meyer tells *Rugby World*. "I toured Scotland

with teams from the Teachers' Training College in Pretoria in 1996 and South Western Districts in 1997, and we played against his sides from the Borders. Then, in 2002, he visited a number of provincial teams in South Africa on a personal development trip for Scottish rugby and spent some time at the Blue Bulls.

"After I was appointed Springbok coach in 2012, I identified the breakdown as a key area where we could improve and tried to get him involved as I knew he was the right guy for the job. He first joined us in August 2013 and immediately started making a difference, especially in the individual work he put in with a lot of our younger players, such as Marcell Coetzee."

Gray is one of life's wheeler-dealers. Shrewd and street smart but also disarmingly self-effacing. But what Meyer is hitting on here is Gray's painstaking attention to detail. In our chat he talks of the 160-plus breakdowns in a game, how even three years ago the discipline was being neglected, how this World Cup could see a line in the sand over the need for players to be aware of their own safety and that of their ➔



Training aid Wales using
the Collision Kings

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▲ Power tool Tom Youngs at work and (left) the Wattbike's performance monitor



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“IT’S A HUGE PERSONAL PRIDE THING. I HAVE A PASSION TO WIN”

HEYNEKE MEYER ON THE WORLD CUP

“FOR US, every match in the Rugby World Cup is a must-win. It is a unique competition and unlike anything we’ve played in before. It’s longer, all in one country and in one week we have two matches. But the basics will be the same for all the teams

and, in the end, everything we’ve worked for comes down to those few weeks in England.

Having said that, I’m extremely excited about the prospect of going to the World Cup – it will be my second one as I was one of Nick Mallett’s assistants in 1999. I can’t wait. This will probably be the closest World Cup yet.

I have no doubt that player management and recovery will be the greatest day-to-day challenge. It’s quite a long tournament and will be the longest tour we will have embarked on as a team since I took over in 2012.

However, we’ve done our planning and the players will get enough time to recharge their batteries in between the hard work we have to do on the field. It will also be great to see new parts of England. We’ve never played in Brighton, Birmingham or Newcastle – but we are not on a holiday.

Big competitions are tough for coaches. I get on well with almost all of them from the top nations as they are the only ones – together with former coaches – who really know what you go through in this job, the pressure, the working environment and the expectations of our countrymen.

For me, it’s about living my dream, accepting the responsibility and expectation, making a difference in people’s lives, giving hope to our nation and making South Africans proud. I’m pretty sure the same goes for all the top international coaches.”

Smash and grab
South Africa halt England

→ opponents in collisions – all owing to good technique. He is the arch acolyte of a niche area.

Meyer sees that. “These days, the breakdown and the speed at which you get the ball back on attack – as well as how you spoil your opponents’ ball – is such a vital part of the game,” says the South Africa head coach.

“Richie came in and from the first day he has brought in new ideas and drills, which he has also implemented at our provincial unions and even the Springbok sevens team, to ensure our top players are up to speed with modern tendencies and how things work at the breakdown. He has made a massive difference in the way we approach the breakdown in South Africa.

“Richie is a team player, he is a teacher, he is creative, and he has enthusiasm, passion and a will to never stop learning and to never give up. He is one of the most passionate rugby men I’ve ever met, an incredibly hard worker and meticulous planner. In short, he’s added an incredible amount to our team in the last three seasons.”

Of course, what this all boils down to is that one of the most innovative and respected coaches in the world game will be facing off against his homeland during this World Cup, the Boks taking on Scotland at St James’ Park on Saturday 3 October. Does the man himself have any reservations about that?

“I’d be a complete liar if I said it was a dilemma!” laughs Gray. “I’m so proud of where I come from but in pro sport I want to be the best and I want my players to be the best. It’s a huge personal pride thing.

“I have this passion to win – it doesn’t matter who against. It’s just the same as when Vern Cotter would have wanted to defeat New Zealand last season, even though he is from New Zealand.” **RW**



Point of difference
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WORDS: PATRICK MCKENDRY MAIN PICTURE: GEOFF CADDICK/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

All Blacks flanker Jerome Kaino opens up about pressure, drink-driving and defending a world title



▲ **Evasion tactics**
Jerome Kaino scores against Wales last year

IT WAS the middle of the 2011 World Cup when Jerome Kaino discovered just how much winning the thing meant to his fellow New Zealanders. In camp with the All Blacks, he received daily reports from his wife Di, who only needed to walk down the drive of their modern house on Auckland's North Shore to collect the mail to gauge the mood of neighbours and those further afield. Their letterbox

would be stuffed fit to bursting with letters, cards and, occasionally, gifts from those wishing him and the team well as the tournament entered the knockout stages.

The Kainos took heart from the thoughtfulness of people they had never set eyes on before, but there was another side to it which they can joke about now. What would have happened if the All Blacks had lost that final to France, instead of scraping home 8-7? Di reckons moving countries would have been a good

KAINO



option such was the importance placed on winning back the cup after 24 years by those who knew exactly where the couple and their two young children lived.

Public property? You could say that. It's something they have become used to, as just about every All Black has. In the small, rugby-obsessed country, you're never far from someone representing the nation in the black jersey. It's more a couple of degrees of separation than six. Winning the Webb Ellis Cup after many years of

disappointment and, at times, grief at the four-yearly failures had also become a non-negotiable.

As the All Blacks prepare for their title defence, Kaino talks of his 2011 memories. "The main one is winning it, obviously, but also all the support from the Pacific Island nations – the Tongans, Samoans, Fijians – that was a huge thing. Obviously having Richie (McCaw) and Kieran (Read) unavailable for the first few Tests, I think that's what brought a lot

THE FACTS

JEROME KAINO

Age 32 (6 April 1983)

Born Tutuila,

American Samoa

Position Back-row

Height 6ft 5in

Weight 16st 7lb

NZ caps 60 (9T)

Twitter @jeromekaino

→ of steel to us loose forwards. Having them back just added to that competition among us. Also, the pressure on us to perform – that was massive.

“It got bottled up during the week of that semi-final (against Australia). There was a lot of nervous energy building up to that. Because we lost to them in Brisbane in our final Test before the World Cup, that added to it. By the end of that game everyone felt like we’d won the grand final – there was such a relief we had beaten them. It was a huge hurdle to get over that game and prepare for the (actual) grand final. It was quite stressful having to refocus after every game and having that expectation thrown on you week in and week out was pretty crazy.”

Kaino, the ironman of the tournament for his ability to play just about every minute apart from the final couple of the semi-final victory over the Wallabies, was the glue that bound the All Blacks loose forwards together. With Read out for the first couple of matches and McCaw playing on a broken foot, it was up to Kaino to lead the physical battle, alongside old warhorse Brad Thorn.

One of Kaino’s standout moments was his tackle on Wallaby Digby Ioane in the semi-final when, with New Zealand leading 8-0 and Ioane seemingly about to score a stunning try, Kaino picked up the wing and drove him back. It looked more like a wrestling move than a tackle, but it was mightily effective. While the Aussies slotted a



On the hop
Testing the Wallabies

BRAD THORN’S AGE IN YEARS – AND 262 DAYS – AT THE 2011 FINAL, MAKING HIM THE OLDEST WORLD CUP WINNER EVER

36

penalty awarded from the resulting ruck, Kaino’s desperate tackle stopped the Wallabies in their tracks and also sent an inspirational message to his own team: losing this match is not an option.

He reckons his poorest game was the final – one of his clearest memories of the game was dropping a France 22m restart – but both McCaw and coach Steve Hansen think he was the player of the tournament, if not the year. Instead, inspirational France skipper Thierry Dusautoir was given the Player of the Year accolade.

THE 32-YEAR-OLD, who was born in American Samoa and arrived in New Zealand with his family aged four, has been in a reflective mood lately. Part of that is due to the fact he has just released his autobiography *My Story*, in which he details his humble upbringing in Papakura, a working-class suburb of South Auckland, and the other reason is the impending defence of a cup for which he and his team-mates had to dig so hard to win last time out.

Kaino was a self-confessed skinny kid growing up with five siblings. His mum Velonika didn’t want him to play rugby because she didn’t want him to get hurt (his nickname



Family man
With daughter Milan in 2009

at home was ‘Aunty’ for his willingness to change nappies and help with household chores). And sure enough a broken collarbone in his first season at senior school almost saw him give the game away. Dad Sa had other ideas, however, after seeing his son show promise.

He is now known for his bone-crunching defence and steamroller ball-carrying, but Kaino started out as a back, pitching up at centre or full-back before going to St Kentigern College on a scholarship. Once his new coach encouraged him to play at loose forward, Kaino’s career flourished and he was an All Black by the age of 21.

Some tough years followed. Issues with alcohol after becoming, in his words, an All Black too young led to a

15

THE NUMBER OF TIMES RICHIE McCAW HAS BEEN ON A LOSING ALL BLACKS SIDE IN HIS RECORD-BREAKING 142 TESTS

drink-driving conviction in 2008 following a couple of years out of international favour. Kaino admits in his book that his drinking would sometimes keep him out until 7am on the day of training with his Blues Super Rugby team, writing: “Because I was so fit I felt I could get back up the next day and train and then sleep it off and recover before the next game came around.”

“Looking back, it was already getting out of control by 2006 and 2007 during the Blues and Auckland seasons, but I didn’t see anything wrong with it. I thought it was absolutely normal and, of course, I was having a lot of fun doing it.

“I would get hangovers, but if I had to do something the next day – training, for example – I would guts it out and get through it. If it was a day off, I pretty much spent it in bed. A lot of people would have known →

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→ I was hungover. Sometimes I would make excuses for stuff I was supposed to do and not turn up at all."

The drink-driving conviction following a minor crash on the morning after a heavy session – for which he was fined and lost his licence for six months – was a wake-up call, as was the birth of his daughter, Milan, in 2009. He promised the All Blacks he would stay off the booze for the rest of 2008 and now he just has the occasional beer.

"I felt like I had arrived as a rugby player and the drinking and partying was something that went with it.

All Black magic
Kaino enjoys the World Cup win four years ago with team-mates

THE NUMBER OF MINUTES JEROME KAINO PLAYED DURING THE 2011 WORLD CUP – MORE THAN ANY OTHER ALL BLACK

558

It was something I enjoyed, but it had to stop," Kaino says now. "Di and I went through some dark times, but we came out of them stronger. I still have a beer at a barbecue or after a Test, but I'm never out all night like I used to do in my twenties. Family comes first."

HE HAS become used to overcoming challenges – from a childhood in a rented house which was constantly burgled, to occasionally relying on food parcels, to the court appearance. From that adversity has come a mental and physical steel, however, and that will be necessary in England and Wales over the next few weeks. While he has been looking back at his origins and past glories, Kaino is determined to add a new chapter before the year is out.

He is picking England, Wales and Ireland to be among the best performing teams at the World Cup. England because of home advantage and their pack, Wales



Show-stopper
Ryan Crotty snatches a late win over Ireland in 2013

PICS: GETTY IMAGES, INPHO & OUTSIDE

because of their excellent loose forwards, including captain Sam Warburton, and Ireland because of the way they are playing as a team under Kiwi coach Joe Schmidt. The All Blacks haven't forgotten how hard they had to work in Dublin in 2013 to avoid a first defeat to the Irish.

The All Blacks know they will face distractions in the UK. They expect the local media to have a crack in order to undermine them and for pressure to come from expectant former All Blacks now domiciled in the UK, as well as the millions of rugby experts back home.

"It's going to be tough. Going to England during the end-of-year tours, they (public and media) ramp up the intensity on the team. It seems the media try to cause disruption with what they talk about. That's going to be amplified with England hosting the tournament and us being champions. It won't be easy but it would be pretty gratifying if we could come home with the trophy."

Asked to clarify his point about the English media, he says: "You can pinpoint what they're going to talk about – the haka and what we do (tactics legal and otherwise). We've spoken about it as a team – possible what-ifs – and the more prepared we are the better we'll be.

"There's a huge expat population over there in terms of Kiwis. That will add to the pressure, knowing what it means to them and knowing how much they are relying on us to get the job done, but the leaders and coaches have a good handle on it and we'll be well prepared."

As Kaino knows only too well, a nation expects. **EW**

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HE'S NOT

Before Paul O'Connell bows

out of international



THE FACTS

PAUL O'CONNELL

Age 35 (20 Oct 1979)

Born Limerick

Position Second-row

Height 6ft 6in

Weight 17st 8lb

Ireland caps 102 (7T)

Lions caps Seven

Twitter @Paul_OConnell

MAIN PICTURE: ADIDAS

DONE YET!

rugby, can the lock lead Ireland into uncharted waters at the World Cup?

WHATEVER HAPPENS during the World Cup, Paul O'Connell will always be a favourite son to the good folk of Limerick. As if to prove their appreciation, there's already a mural of the great man they call 'Paulie', admittedly with the thatch of red hair that has long since departed.

The Irish captain lets out a chuckle when reminded of it, and there's little doubt he will return to the town he holds so dear at some juncture after a two-year sojourn at three-time European champions Toulon – the closest thing rugby has to the Harlem Globetrotters.

For now Toulon can wait as O'Connell has the small matter of leading Ireland into a World Cup for which they are one of the favourites – no small matter when you're pegged as perennial underachievers after failing to claw beyond the quarter-finals in seven attempts.

O'Connell has been part of three of those failed missions and, despite a long sigh at the mention, he's at a stage where he's just thankful his body has allowed him to take Ireland into his fourth World Cup, with his 36th birthday fast approaching. By nature O'Connell isn't one for dwelling on records, but he gamely acknowledges the good fortune of a Test career that reached the 100-cap mark back in March, 14 years after a first outing against Wales in Dublin.

"It is a proud moment to be going into your fourth World Cup, alright. I'm lucky that as a second-row forward, when things slow down, like your speed, they aren't relied on as much as in other positions," he says modestly. "It seems like only yesterday that I was all wide-eyed Down Under for the 2003 World Cup." ➔

◀ **Making his mark**
O'Connell is set to become Ireland's most-capped forward at RWC 2015

➔ O'Connell will retire from Test rugby after the World Cup so this will be the last time fans get to see him in that No 5 shirt. Expect every last run, tackle, breakdown hit and lineout take to be savoured by the masses in green – but O'Connell bats down any eulogies.

“Mind and body have been good to me. Take Stephen Ferris. He had the potential to have a phenomenal career for Ulster, Ireland and the Lions and has unfairly fallen by the wayside. Even at Munster, Jerry Flannery, Denis Leamy, Ian Dowling and Barry Murphy were players expected to be the backbone for Munster but were lost to injury too early. You can't take anything for granted in this game. You like to think that playing 12 or 13 years consecutively is down to your professionalism but there's undoubtedly a big element of luck.”

While playing at the top level for so long is creditable, it's worth noting that O'Connell has had the added responsibility of leading men for nearly a decade, with Munster, Ireland and the 2009 Lions.

“Self-belief is one thing but equally important is not getting too far ahead of yourself,” he says. “A strong dose of perspective, whether you're the captain of the Lions, Ireland or Munster is healthy, but you have to have certain values and a way of going about your business. The Lions captaincy came with huge media scrutiny, but strip it back and you're still trying to lead a group of players by example and making it fun along the way.”

Being a totem for any side he's played for, you wonder if he's ever wanted for motivation when stories of his dedication are legion. After all, this is a man who taught himself Afrikaans so he could work out the Springboks'



PICT: INPHO

lineout calls during the Lions series. “No, I've never struggled to get myself up for a game, but there have been times I've come back maybe a bit early from injury and thought, 'I just want a few weeks to get myself right' but that's impossible when you're captain. You need to be able to pick and choose when you take time out – it's about self-management at my ripe old age,” he chuckles.

With every passing year, O'Connell says he's seeing younger locks coming through looking to usurp the grand old men of the engine room like Victor Matfield, Bakkies Botha, Ali Williams, Jamie Cudmore and himself. Current World Rugby Player of the Year Brodie Retallick, Courtney Lawes, Eben Etzebeth and Sam Whitelock are all at least nine years younger than O'Connell. Rather than feel threatened, though, he's quick to pay tribute to the new generation.



▲ On the march Making yards against Scotland last month

“There are some incredible players coming through. Every year you see them coming onto the world stage. I have to say we have Iain Henderson, who stands out massively for me. He showed incredible form after injury last year. I'll always respect those 120kg men, who can move swiftly over the turf and make a difference late on. It's not just locks either. Take Cian (Healy), he has phenomenal power. To be locked in a scrum for ten to 12 seconds and emerge to do the kind of things he does around the pitch is phenomenal. What I've noticed is players coming through aren't just good rugby players but serious athletes. Soon you're going to need pace in every position, not just with nine to 15 on their back but one to eight. It will be a prerequisite.”

The game has certainly evolved since O'Connell's first World Cup as a 24-year-old and he speaks warmly of an event when he could be relatively carefree. “I turned pro in 2001 and everything happened quickly. In Australia, I had no leadership role in the team, so my goal was just getting picked. They were more innocent, more naïve times and I was just this youngster hanging onto the coat-tails of great players like Woody (Keith Wood), Brian O'Driscoll, Ronan O'Gara and Peter Stringer.”

After the generally positive impression left by 2003, RWC 2007 left O'Connell with altogether more negative emotions as Ireland were unceremoniously dumped out of the tournament in the pool stages and coach Eddie O'Sullivan then departed within six months.

“France was a huge disappointment. Looking back I think we got our preparation wrong. We'd had a good autumn, beating South Africa and Australia, and then lost a Grand Slam decider narrowly to a late France try, but we arrived very flat physically and mentally. I couldn't understand it. We were poor ➔



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→ against Namibia and I thought it was a blip. Then we couldn't get going against Georgia and it got worse. We were beaten out the gate by Argentina and France, and before you knew it, we were out."

The last time O'Connell played a World Cup game was in Wellington in 2011 as an Ireland side, buoyed by a win over the Wallabies, went out to Wales in the quarter-finals, but his memories aren't altogether sour. "It sounds funny saying it but apart from the Wales game, I enjoyed the tournament. We'd learnt a lot from 2007 in regards to preparation and went out to Queenstown for a week to get over the jetlag. We had a ball. We went bungee jumping, white-water rafting and had a good night out. It really set us up. We played good stuff against Australia and Italy, so went in confident to the Wales game but got caught cold," he says ruefully.

This year Ireland have entered uncharted territory, consecutive Six Nations titles and some big wins taking them to second in the world rankings for the first time. Joe Schmidt is roundly credited as the architect of this rise. Despite suggestions Schmidt and O'Connell would struggle to mesh, with lineages so strongly linked with Leinster and Munster, the relationship has been fruitful.

"Ah, Joe's been excellent. Since the disappointment against Australia (in 2013), we've played very well, even if we've lost a few (against New Zealand, England and Wales). Joe makes my job easier, he's a hard taskmaster. He drives standards to such an extent that I can focus on myself to get body and mind right. In the past I'd have been the guy who gave a size 13 boot up the backside but there's no place for that any more. In Test rugby, you deal with highly-motivated people who don't need it."

► **Down time**
Trying the Queenstown luge during RWC 2011



One of the most poignant moments of the 2003 World Cup was seeing a retiring Keith Wood embracing fellow warhorse Fabien Galthié as France beat Ireland. So how does O'Connell think he'll feel when his time in an Ireland shirt comes to an end? "Whatever happens, it's been a thrilling ride. In the last ten years, Ireland have been playing largely at the top table in Europe and challenging for Six Nations titles. To be part of that journey has been brilliant. I couldn't ask for more."

On paper – whatever that's worth – Ireland should coast through their pool matches against Canada, Romania and Italy before meeting France at the Millennium Stadium. It's not exactly lost on O'Connell that Ireland are heavily backed but he isn't getting carried away. "We've been successful in recent years by not getting ahead of ourselves. For the management and players the big emphasis is preparing for that first game and looking no further than that. I know the support is



"THE SUPPORT IS GOING TO BE INCREDIBLE. WE'LL HARNESS THAT EMOTION"

going to be incredible and we'll harness that emotion to enjoy the competition. My message to the younger guys is to make it count because it could be your only shot."

Whatever transpires in the coming weeks, O'Connell will definitely be taking the well-trodden path of rugby superstars to the Cote d'Azur and Mourad Boudjellal's theatre of dreams at the Stade Mayol. It's a step into the unknown for the 6ft 6in lock. "I've played at Munster all my life and have only known one way of doing things, but whatever I do after rugby I believe I'll be better off for having had this experience. Plenty of players have succeeded out there so I don't see why I can't."

When he takes those final steps outside the four tramlines that have defined his Test career, with or without the Webb Ellis Cup, there's little doubt a certain mural on Musgrave Road, Limerick, will remain intact.

Pushed on his plans for the future, O'Connell is non-committal. "When the rugby finishes I'd like to think I'll settle back in Limerick but who knows what the future will bring? All I do know is that I've enjoyed every single minute of my career." **RW**

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“THERE’S DEFINITELY UNFINISHED BUSINESS”

Wales captain **Sam Warburton** tells S4C what he hopes to achieve at this World Cup and looks back at the events of four years ago

HERE’S SAM Warburton looking striking in a hoodie. Behind him is the Severn Bridge, which is central to S4C’s Cwpan Rygbi'r Byd 2015 promotional campaign as the iconic bridge connects

Wales with England and its arches resemble rugby posts. The Welsh language channel are showing nine World Cup games live and they caught up with the Wales captain to discuss his tournament hopes.

The back-rower, who led Wales to the World Cup semi-finals in 2011, is quietly confident, but knows that being grouped with Australia, England, Fiji and Uruguay will be one of Wales’ biggest challenges yet.

“Confidence is high in the squad and we have stability from the players to the management and the staff behind the scenes,” says Warburton. “With no disrespect to those we played in 2011, it’s a more difficult group this time. We’ve got two top-tier nations in England and Australia, and Fiji caused us problems in the autumn,

so it’s going to be mentally tough. But if you want to win the World Cup, you’re going to have to beat those sides at some point. There’s no easy route to the final.”

As for his sending-off at RWC 2011 for a tip tackle on France’s Vincent Clerc, Warburton says: “A lot of people will remember my tournament for that red card. It was unfortunate. But I try to look back at all the successes, like beating Ireland in the quarter-final. Coming back and beating Samoa, coming close against South Africa. We had a record win over Namibia and Fiji we nailed.

“There are so many highs to remember. Even though that red card did taint it a bit for me, there are plenty of good memories, but definitely unfinished business.”

And what is his favourite childhood World Cup memory? “To be honest, it would have to be (Jonny) Wilkinson’s drop-goal. That was the first World Cup I really watched. I saw that England team of 2003 do so well and I always wanted to emulate that in a Welsh jersey.”

★ **Captain Sam**
Warburton led Wales to a 2012 Grand Slam

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WHAT? S4C will broadcast all Wales’ 2015 World Cup pool games live in Welsh as well as the opening match between England and Fiji, one quarter-final, one semi-final, the bronze final and the final. On top of the nine live games, S4C also have a midweek rugby club highlights and analysis show, the talk show *Jonathan* and the rugby choirs TV competition *Codi Canu*.

WHO? Their punditry team boasts plenty of Test experience, with 405 Wales caps, 86 tries and 1,344 points between the ten players. There are five Joneses – Dafydd, Deiniol, Derwyn, Gwyn and Stephen – as well as Shane Williams, Dwayne Peel, Arthur Emyr and the Robinson brothers, Jamie and Nick. They are joined by an experienced team, including presenter Gareth Roberts and commentator Wyn Gruffydd.

WHERE? S4C is available on: Sky 104, Freeview 4, Virgin TV 166 and Freesat 104 in Wales, and on Sky 134, Freesat 120 and Virgin TV 166 in England, Scotland and Northern Ireland. You can also watch online and on demand at s4c.cymru. Viewers across the UK can watch S4C live on mobiles and tablets via tvcatchup.com and TVPlayer.com, while S4C programmes are also available on YouView and BBC iPlayer.

THE GWYN JONES VIEW

THE EX-WALES CAPTAIN IS PART OF S4C'S 2015 CWPAN RYGBI'R BYD COVERAGE. THESE ARE HIS THOUGHTS ON THE TOURNAMENT

In the past there has been a chasm between North and South, which became even more apparent during the Rugby World Cup. That gap has closed considerably but it has not yet disappeared.

New Zealand look to be a league apart from other teams. They are fit and strong but what sets them apart is the speed at which they can play a high-skill game under pressure.

South Africa and Australia look strong but don't have the same fear factor as the All Blacks. They are both ultra-competitive but in northern hemisphere conditions they can be beaten, and indeed have been in recent years.

The advantage the southern hemisphere have is that they will be match-fit and battle-hardened. The northern hemisphere will be fit and



lean but a little rusty. The balance the European coaches must strike is when to ease down the fitness and start focusing on the rugby. You could have a pack that look like Greek gods, but if they can't win a lineout it is all rather pointless.

Physically, the teams are all in good shape. They all work incredibly hard and I would be surprised if conditioning was a major point of difference in the World Cup. If that is the case, then the matches in this World Cup will be won by the team that has the best technique, that employs the most efficient tactics and the team with the most skill.

It seems to me that the game has opened up a little in the last year. It feels like sides want to attack more and take the odd risk. Cup rugby, however, usually makes teams more cautious and there is no bigger cup than the one played for this autumn.

There is little to choose between all of the teams save New Zealand and if they have another World Cup brain fade, as they have the habit of doing, this really is anyone's to win.

HUNGER

WORDS: SARAH MOCKFORD // MAIN PICTURE: BEN EVANS/HUW EVANS AGENCY

GAMES

After five months on the sidelines, Wales wing George North is determined to make an impact at the World Cup



S

ITTING WITH George North at Wales' training base, you have to remind yourself that five years have passed since he made his Test debut against South Africa, marking the occasion with two tries, because he is much the same as he was in 2010. He still possesses the laid-back demeanour and cheeky grin despite being the youngest player ever to reach 50 caps, scoring more than 20 Test tries and being part of a World Cup campaign as well as a successful Lions series. There is a childlike enthusiasm to the winger whose sheer size is anything but childlike.

There is a clear divide, however, to his off-field personality and his on-field mindset. Ask North how he thinks he's changed since the World Cup in 2011 and he says he's matured. "Not many people will see that and I wouldn't say I've matured as a person off the field – I'm still immature! – but I'm wiser to the game and more rugby smart," explains the 23-year-old. "I'd like to think I've matured as a player and progressed with my catching, passing and kicking, although that can always be improved. It's also knowing how to deal with everything on and off the field – the weight of expectation, what the public perceives you to be."

While we're looking back on 2011, it's clear that the disappointment of losing the semi-final 9-8 to France is driving the squad on. Around 50% of the Wales players from last time out are still involved, as are all ➔

→ the coaches, so not only is there a knowledge of what is required at rugby's four-yearly showpiece but memories of how close they came to making history by reaching the final – they were one long-range penalty away – are at the forefront of their minds.

"There's massive hunger," he says. "From our point of view, we were so close last time and had so much more to give. Even in that France game when Warby was gone (Sam Warburton was sent off after 19 minutes) we felt we were in the game and that showed the character of the boys. We were about a foot short of winning! The boys were gutted because we knew we had more to give."

"A lot of that squad is still here, which is brilliant for the boys as we can push on and continue the standards of what we expect from each other. There's a familiarity – we know what each player can do. It's about knowing when you're trailing someone if they're a left- or right-foot stepper, will there be an offload out the back and so on. That's all developed over time together. I don't know if it's the same in other camps, but the boys are so at ease with each other. It's not an effort to talk to each other. We're all close and there's a real buzz in camp."

So plenty of strides forward have been made – and not just of the literal variety that his huge frame allows. As for the hunger Wales feel collectively, it is more acute for North personally. Last season was dominated by a series of concussions, which resulted in a lengthy lay-off for the winger and headlines dominated by the issue. It was his fourth concussion of the season, suffered when playing for Northampton against Wasps at Franklin's Gardens in March, which meant he was stood down long term, so it's little wonder he's desperate to get back into the thick of things.

He is quick to praise the medical staff at both Northampton and Wales for their help and support, and is frank when discussing the symptoms he experienced. "For me it was my balance and headaches. People think of a headache as quite a little thing but I'm a fit guy, I'm used to hard graft Monday to Friday, playing Saturday and recovering on Sunday. (After concussion) I'd be doing little things like hoovering or washing a pan and I'd get a massive headache and need to lie down for ten minutes. With my balance, I'd be walking along fine but if I closed my eyes I couldn't stand upright."



▲ **Another blow** Knocked out against Wasps earlier this year



▲ **Size matters** Getting in the face of the French during that 2011 semi-final



"That all subsided quickly but I just felt I wasn't quite right and I didn't feel like myself. People see you walking around, laughing and joking, and there's nothing outwardly wrong with you – you're not on crutches and your arm's not in a sling – but with concussion you can't see the problem and aspects can be underestimated."

While North would rather not have become the poster child for concussion, he does appreciate that his experiences have helped raise awareness of the issue – an issue that has been high on rugby's agenda for the past couple of years. So what advice would he give anyone who's suffered concussion? "Rest straightaway – don't do anything for at least 48 hours. That's two days of doing nothing, no phones, driving, TV – complete rest for mind and body. That's when the brain gets most of its recovery done."

"Also, be honest with yourself. If you're still feeling rough or something's not quite right, tell people. The neurologists would ask me if something was normal for me and if the answer is 'no' you still need more time. Concussion is not an injury to be taken lightly."

The benefit of five months without a match is a chance to refresh after a non-stop schedule since he made his Test bow as a teenager back in 2010. When North spoke to *Rugby World* last summer, he was reflecting on a 13-month period →

NORTH ON HIS TEAM-MATES

MOST VAIN **Phillys** (Mike Phillips). He's brilliant, I've got a lot of time for him, but he's the vainest. Rhys Priestland's up there too; he's into what he wears.

BEST DRESSED Does it have to be a player? I'd say **Prav Mathema** (WRU's Medical Manager). He loves his threads.

WORST DRESSED **Samson Lee** – I can't even describe it.

TIGHTEST **James King** is tighter than cramp.

BEST SINGER **Dan Lydiate** (left). He's all about power ballads. The worst? I'll put me in there.

BEST BANTER **Scotty Wills**. He's quite funny – very sharp with his comebacks.

WORST BANTER **James King**. It's horrendous, it's awkward hearing him talk.

BEST ROOM-MATE **Warby** (Sam Warburton). He'll bring your washing back and make you a cup of tea.

WORST ROOM-MATE **Sanjay** (Liam Williams). He snores like a train.

BEST WITH LADIES **Gareth Davies** thinks he is but he's horrendous.

TEAM-MATE YOU'D LIKE TO BE Who wouldn't be **Leigh**

Halfpenny (right)? He's got a mental pad, the biggest house in Toulon, and does what he wants!





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Is there someone at your club who deserves this prize? To nominate your club's unsung hero, visit debbieandandrews.co.uk/rugbyworld and explain why they deserve to win. RW

will select two winners to attend the dinner as guests of debbie&andrew's.

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WELSH EXILES

BOYS AGED 13 – 18

GIRLS U18

STUDENTS

WOMEN

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→ in which he had played 41 games for club, country and the Lions – that is a hectic workload in such a physically demanding sport and one he admitted at the time had taken its toll. This summer he had a chance to holiday in Ibiza with a few Saints team-mates as well as spend time with his family and girlfriend Becky James, the GB cyclist, before beginning Wales' brutal World Cup preparations. It's the little things that he enjoyed – walking the dog, having a lie-in, playing golf, getting out on his bike.

"I'm a creature of habit, so I want to play as much as I can, but some people may call it a blessing in disguise. It was my first proper break since my first cap, so nearly five years, as the most you get off after a summer tour before going back for pre-season is three weeks. When the season's on it's like Defcon Three or full-fat milk, if you know what I mean, so I did very little really. Having time away from the boys, when you usually spend every day with them, was quite nice. Rugby's so emotionally driven, there's so much pressure that I like to get on my bike and chill out. You can mentally have a break, going from playing in front of 80,000 to a recovery spin with no one else around but some sheep baa-ing away."

It's just as well he managed to recharge the batteries because he would have needed all his energy to face Wales' pre-season camps. Switzerland may have had beautiful views and Qatar impressive facilities, but the training itself was hardcore, even with Paul 'Bobby' Stridgeon – a friendly face from the Lions tour – taking the sessions. North describes it as "an evil you have to go through" and talks of feeling like he could see gremlins during running drills, but he's a man who enjoys working hard and recognises the long-term benefits.

Now the fitness is in the bank, attention has turned to Pool A – undoubtedly the toughest pool in World Cup history. There has been lots of talk of how points

▼ **Roman holiday** En route to his first Test hat-trick against Italy at the Stadio Olimpico in March. He has also scored a brace in six Internationals



▼ **Adrenaline rush**
Being adventurous at Zip World, North Wales



difference could be crucial, with Australia, England and Wales all capable of taking results off one another, not to mention Fiji's potential to cause an upset. However, North swats aside talk of tactics that will generate big points tallies and is instead focused on winning every game. He is also keen to stress the threat Fiji pose.

"Never underestimate Fiji," he says. "One of my first caps was against them and we drew 16-16. As the years have gone on, more Fijians are playing professionally in the Premiership and the Pro12. They've won the Pacific Nations Cup and are getting more momentum. They're physically massive guys and they like to throw

"IT WAS MY FIRST PROPER BREAK SINCE MY DEBUT"

the ball around. I think them, Samoa and Tonga could cause a bit of upset in the groups."

North will be hoping to upset a few of his Saints team-mates when Wales face England at Twickenham on 26 September and in the final pool game he should renew acquaintances with "class act" Israel Folau, who he famously carried on his shoulder when attacking

for the Lions in Australia two summers ago.

It's been a long road back for North, much of that journey spent in the media spotlight, and now he's hoping to generate headlines for his rugby feats rather than his head injuries. He wants to get back to doing what he does best. "There's only so much conditioning you can do to get fit for rugby and I've had five months off with concussion. So I'm really hungry to get back out there."

Hungry and more mature – Wales' Pool A opponents have been warned! **RW**



PICS: GETTY IMAGES, HUME EVANS AGENCY & INFO

▲ **Flying Fijian** Nemani Nadolo troubles Wales' defence last autumn in Cardiff

THE FACTS

GEORGE NORTH

Age 23 (13 April 1992)
Born King's Lynn, Norfolk
Position Wing
Club Northampton
Wales caps 49 (22T)
Lions caps Three (2T)
Twitter @George_North

GEORGIA

THE BEST TIGHTHEAD

IN THE WORLD

*(you've
never
heard of)*

Well known to the best operators in the game but by no means a household name, we introduce you to Georgia's anchor, Davit Zirakashvili

WORDS: ALAN DYMOCK

MAIN PIC: DEAN MOUHARPOULOS/GETTY IMAGES





ALEXANDRE MENINI looks up. He isn't quite distressed, but this situation is hardly relaxing. Champions Cup finals are by definition a pitting of the best against the best, but this is also what the whole Toulon project is about: conquering Europe. Yet as the French loosehead eyes another scrum, aware he's the gatekeeper for clean ball as opponents Clermont mount further set-piece attacks, his gaze catches on the

boulder of a Georgian No 3 in front of him. Quiet, but with a wild look in his eyes, Davit Zirakashvili has already seen off Toulon's first-choice Xavier Chiocci. Zirakashvili's team trail this 2015 Twickenham final, 19-11 after an hour, but if he can just get another edge...

The scrum wheels early, precipitating a call from referee Nigel Owens for players to "stay where you are". Zirakashvili noticeably readjusts, hollowing his back as Menini tries to no avail to pull his hips in and get as straight as the Georgian. The ball is fed in and the drive comes on, churning, shunting. As Menini yields only a tiny amount, the Clermont loosehead on the other side seizes what little momentum there is and pumps the scrum round a few yards. It's a turnover. Job done. ➡



➔ That play was a minor footnote in a game of huge magnitude, with Toulon going on to win their third European Cup in a row. It was hardly noteworthy on the hour mark either. Seconds before, star blindside Juan Smith departed to be replaced by star blindside Juan Martín Fernández Lobbe, and seconds after that scrum Clermont centre Jonathan Davies was buried by a devastating hit from winger Drew Mitchell.

Yet there is something in the efforts of Zirkashvili during that passage that is so fitting. He is the labourer, the man who never grumbles as he brushes metaphorical sawdust off his knees. He is the leader who only dreamt of being a worker. He carries all the angles and eventualities in his head, like a veteran snooker player, but when his minor goals are reached he won't be hollering and slapping backs.

For that reason it is easy to describe Zirkashvili as the best tighthead in the world you have never heard of. Because he's a proud Georgian with no Six Nations or Rugby Championship to work in, he can be overlooked. He has only ever won one title with Clermont, taking the Top 14 in 2010, but even then he had to make do as a substitute for Argentine great Martín Scelzo. You have to really look for him before you can see him.

His work and his character are worth looking out for, though. Once you begin to hear from team-mates and coaches – even opponents – you begin to appreciate who Zirkashvili is. First, you must understand his journey.

"When I came to Clermont in 2006, they had three strong scrum cultures within the squad," says the club's former boss and now Scotland head coach Vern Cotter. "One was Argentinian, with Scelzo at tighthead and

Mario Ledesma at hooker. Laurent Emmanuelli was a French loosehead, with Thomas Domingo coming through. Then there were the two Georgian props.

"There was Davit and Goderdzi Shvelidze, with Davit the younger one. Georgians are so very respectful of hierarchy and age so he was a very quiet, junior member. He was living in the shadows of Scelzo, who was a legend of Test rugby, but I quickly saw that he was mobile and could carry, and he was very strong – a big part of his youth in sport involved wrestling. And as Dato, as he's known, started taking Martín's place, we saw he was growing. Being a shy and humble person, showing respect to Martín, it took him a while to come through and be confident enough to stand up.

"In the end, he was running scrums at Clermont. He came from being a very shy, almost secondary person to taking the major role with Benjamin Kayser and Domingo. He became my right-hand man with regards to strategy and technique. He's absolutely outstanding."

Cotter insists that this wasn't an easy progression. Some coaches had to put an arm around Zirkashvili's shoulder as he took time to evolve, but that didn't prove a problem as "he's such a nice guy". He always asked questions, got in early to do

▲ **Fireworks**
Shrugging off Pumas prop Marcos Ayerza

THE FACTS

DAVIT ZIRKASHVILI

Age 31 (20 Sep 1983)
Born Rustavi, Georgia
Position Prop
Club Clermont
Test caps 48 (8T)





his analysis. Top props aren't made, you see, they have to work bloody hard to learn their craft.

Georgia head coach Milton Haig agrees with that sentiment. "I've known Dato for three and a half years. Absolutely he has improved greatly in the scrum in that time. He used to be great around the field but knew that scrummaging was a part of his game he had to work on. But I told Jonno Gibbes when he replaced Vern at Clermont, Dato is now the best tighthead in Europe."

Haig isn't alone in his lofty praise. Cotter was convinced of Zirakashvili's world-class credentials after seeing him dismantle Leinster in a crunch match in 2013. Argentina loosehead Marcos Ayerza – who could go one-on-one with Zirakashvili in Pool C of this World Cup – values the tighthead's work over most others in the world because of his honesty and willingness to challenge you without falling, popping or crabbing. Clermont mate Jamie Cudmore says he is definitely one of the best tightheads in the world. Those who work closely with Zirakashvili cannot say enough about him.

"There is not one Six Nations team who wouldn't have him in their side," insists his close friend and France hooker Kayser. "He's a mix of a lot of guys I have played with – he has the same craziness in his eyes that my old Leicester team-mate Julian White used to have. He has that anger to eat his opponent!"

"I feel extremely lucky to play with him. We are very honest with each other. We have the same anger, the same fire to never accept domination, so we tell each other what we like and don't like about the other's game."

"In the World Cup I think Georgia can give Argentina a run for their money in the scrum and a contest between Dato and Ayerza – who is probably the strongest loosehead at the moment – could produce fireworks. But Georgia don't really have the element of surprise anymore because we all know how strong they are in the scrum. Everyone respects that and the scrum could be an area where Georgia can push the All Blacks, but they won't get too many other surprises..."

It would be pie in the sky to think New Zealand will be beaten by Georgia, but if the Eastern Europeans want to bloody a nose they could do worse than rally around Zirakashvili. That is if they haven't already, on and off

Well qualified
Celebrating Georgia reaching RWC 2015

Strong pals
With his hooker Benjamin Kayser



"ANY SIX NATIONS TEAM WOULD HAVE HIM IN THEIR SIDE"

MASTER OF DARK ARTS

1 HEINEKEN HIGH

This is the game in 2013 when Zirakashvili's work against Leinster wowed Vern Cotter.



2 FRESH FACED

A 24-year-old Dato started on the day, in 2007, Georgia beat Namibia – their first RWC win.



3 ONE-MAN WAR

A sub (17) after just 24 minutes in the 2011 loss to England, here he takes on the pack by himself.



PICTURES: GETTY IMAGES & INPHO

the pitch. Clermont's Cudmore lets us in on a few things we didn't know about Dato. "He's really intelligent and he's big into history, both French and Georgian. And he helped out a local politician, a conservative candidate in Clermont, which you probably wouldn't expect."

And how respected is he? "Well, he's the big boss with our other Georgian boys, who always come to him for help and advice – whenever the club have something to celebrate or we have any holiday time they are straight round his house for a barbecue!" laughs Cudmore.

Haig explains the value of Zirakashvili in Georgia's base. "He's obviously a leader. In the last 18 months he's become a lot more vocal off the field. He has a really neat sense of humour and I think we see that now because he's comfortable. Among the other players he is quite

revered. He looks, he listens. You have to win his respect and trust, but once you do that he is loyal and he will go to the wall for you.

"That's the other thing about Dato. He is a big player for one of the best teams in Europe but he's never refused to play for Georgia,

not even for June Tests so close to the end of the Top 14 season. At one stage we tried to tell him to have a rest but he wanted to represent Georgia in the Tbilisi Cup!"

Honest. Loyal. Technical. Improving. Under the radar? There is a lot you can say about Davit Zirakashvili. He is an impressive man. But whether you are convinced or not, you must appreciate what he means to those lining up beside him. Which is why the closing words on the tighthead must go to a Georgian, the No 8 who profits from clean scrum ball, Dimitri Basilaia.

"When I play next to him I'm confident I stand next to one of the world's greatest props and players. To say he will perform superbly says nothing. Our opponents will have some really tough times playing against him!" **RW**

WESLEY



THE FACTS **WESLEY FOFANA**

Age 27 (20 Jan 1988)
Born Paris
Position Centre
Club Clermont Auvergne
Test caps 34 (11T)
Twitter @wesleyfofana

WORDS: GAVIN MORTIMER MAIN PICTURE: OFFSIDE



SNIPES

He's the danger man of the France team, but can Wesley Fofana produce his best form on the World Cup stage?

WESLEY FOFANA is the most gifted French threequarter of his generation. The 27-year-old, who was born and bred in Paris and spent much of his childhood playing football, was first capped by France in the 2012 Six Nations.

One of the few automatic selections during the turbulent reign of Philippe Saint-André, Fofana is arguably *les Bleus'* only world-class player. Yet despite his huge talent, Fofana has had little to show in terms of silverware since he signed for Clermont Auvergne in 2008. He was not a regular starter when they won their only Top 14 title in 2010. He's also had the misfortune of being part of the most unsuccessful France side of the modern era. With just 14 victories in his first 34 Tests, Fofana and France have not finished higher than fourth in the last four Six Nations Championships. Consequently, most pundits have written off France's World Cup chances, something which, as Fofana tells *Rugby World*, doesn't vex him or his team-mates. →

Rugby World: So football was your sport of choice when you were growing up in Paris?

Wesley Fofana: Yes. My dad was a pretty good footballer in his day; he played in what today would be the third or fourth (French) division. He's not a coach now but he runs a football development programme for children in Paris, so he's more of a youth leader.

RW: When did you start playing rugby then?

WF: I would have been about 13 or 14 years old.

RW: Was your dad sad when you gave up football?

WF: I think he was a little disappointed but he said to me, "You do what you want, but just don't ask me for advice about rugby because I know nothing about the sport!" But he comes to watch me play whenever he can.

RW: How did your mum take the switch?

WF: She was terrified at first. She went out and bought me all the protection possible – the helmet, shoulder pads, mouthguard. She's still scared for me; every time I go into a ruck she holds her breath until I emerge.

RW: Your father was born in Mali. Are those roots important to you?

WF: Those roots are important but I've only had the chance to visit Mali once, and my brother has never been there, although I hope to visit again in the future.

RW: Have you always been a centre?

WF: At first I played everywhere – in the centre, on the wing, at fly-half, full-back. I even played prop for a time.

RW: You were once a prop?!

WF: Yes. In fact, when I first arrived at Clermont (in 2008) I weighed 102kg (16st) and had 21% body fat.

RW: How difficult was it to shed the kilos?

WF: In my second year at Clermont, the professional squad went on a summer tour to the USA. I stayed in France and for a month or so I just trained and trained every day with a fitness trainer. By the end of the summer I was completely lean, down to 8% body fat.

RW: Why did a lad from Paris choose Clermont?

WF: They first approached me when I was 18. At first I refused because I had just entered the National Centre of Rugby at Marcoussis, so I decided to stay in Paris and finish my bac (baccalauréat, equivalent to A Levels). The club then contacted me the following year and by then I knew the recruiter and the region a little better, having visited once already, and so I said, "Okay, no problem".

RW: Was it tough as a Parisian to move to Clermont?

WF: The first year was difficult. On several occasions



I considered packing it in and returning to Paris. But each time either the coach or someone else at the academy sat me down and convinced me to stay. Now, all these years later, I can't imagine leaving.

RW: Is there anything you still miss about Paris?

WF: Obviously I miss my family, who are still there, but other than them there is not much now.

RW: You came through the France ranks with the likes of Yoann Maestri, Morgan Parra and Mathieu Bastareaud. Has Basta always been that size?

WF: Yes he has! The player you see today was the player I first saw at the age of 14. We stay in regular contact and he is a great friend of mine.

RW: The French press have been very critical of what they see as France's sterility under head coach Philippe Saint-André. Are they justified?

WF: Sometimes I think the criticism is fair, and at other times I think it's not. But it's part of the sporting culture in France, that the press and the public are very demanding of their players. We're used to it but sometimes it's quite hard to take.

RW: But the Fofana who plays for Clermont is different to the one who plays for France. Do you feel frustrated sometimes when playing for France?

WF: No, not frustrated. We've had a game plan since the beginning (of Saint-André's reign) that we're working on. Perhaps I have less space, less opportunity to express myself, but if I look back over the last four years



Creating space
Playing for Clermont

PICS: GETTY IMAGES & OFFSIDE

DID YOU KNOW?

Fofana played as a central defender during his football days, turning out for the same Paris youth side as AC Milan and France forward Jérémy Menez. "He was amazing," recalls Fofana. "We just gave him the ball and he went and scored!"



Touchdown!
Scoring against
Italy in 2014

“THE FRENCH PUBLIC ARE VERY DEMANDING”

I've been more successful (with the plan) than I've failed with it. There are no feelings of frustration. Some games I've played better than others, that's how it goes.

RW: The clash that is likely to decide Pool D is France versus Ireland. How do you rate the Irish?

WF: Highly! I've never beaten them. In the Six Nations I've drawn twice against them and lost once (he missed the 2014 defeat with a fractured rib). The Irish are very well organised and they play with 100% commitment. In addition they've got a group of very talented and experienced players. The match in this year's Six Nations was frustrating as we had two or three opportunities to win but failed to take them (Ireland won 18-11). But we'll have the chance for revenge in the World Cup.

RW: Is the Italy game a potential banana skin?

WF: I don't think we'll treat them lightly. We've lost to Italy twice in the Six Nations in recent seasons so we know their strengths. A lot of their players play in the Top 14 so we're aware of the threat they'll pose.

RW: You've just become a father for the first time. It must be tough to be separated from the family?

WF: We had a daughter at the start of May and yes, there are mixed emotions. Obviously being together as a

DID YOU KNOW?

Fofana scored a try in each of his first four Tests (v Italy, Scotland, Ireland and England) – becoming only the third player to do so after Carston Catchside of England and New Zealand's Doug Howlett. Howlett holds the record with tries in his first seven Tests.



▲ **Moving up** France climb the Grande Motte glacier during a pre-RWC camp

squad the whole summer gave us a great opportunity to work and build towards the World Cup, and it puts us on a level footing with everyone else as we have just as much time to prepare as other countries. But at the same time it does mean being away from the family for a long time. But that is one of the sacrifices we are all prepared to make.

RW: Are you ready for six weeks living in England?

WF: It will be different! In fact, the whole experience will be something new for me because I didn't win my first French cap until after the 2011 World Cup and I have never played in a big tournament, not even when I was with the French junior sides.

RW: How is your English?

WF: I can speak a little bit. I know how to communicate with some of Clermont's other players in English.

RW: With so many foreign stars, is communication sometimes a problem at Clermont?

WF: No, it's never a problem at Clermont to communicate with the rest of the back-line. Brock (James) speaks French, Nick (Abendanon) can already speak some French, and I know how to speak in both languages if necessary, so there is never a problem and everyone has adapted very well.

RW: There aren't many people who believe France can win the World Cup. What do you think?

WF: Speaking personally – and I think the other players feel the same way – we are going to ignore everything that is written and said in the lead-up to the World Cup, so that we can just concentrate on our preparation. Then when the tournament starts we will just take one match after another and play with 100% commitment. We believe in ourselves, and what others believe is not our problem. **RW**

ON THE CUTTING EDGE

WORDS: ALAN DYMOCK MAIN PICTURE: AFLO SPORT

Rugby World takes a look at the advanced technology ASICS employed to kit out the Springboks and Wallabies for RWC 2015



IF YOU reckon the training aids, tracking and techniques used to prepare players' bodies for a World Cup are impressive, you haven't considered how advanced the tech used to develop their kit is.

According to James Noorkoiv, ASICS' product manager for rugby, producing the jerseys for both South Africa and Australia's run at this year's Rugby World Cup, and providing boots for some of the game's biggest stars, threw up some intriguing dilemmas for his team. However these challenges are nothing new for the company's fine scientific minds based in Kobe, Japan. Far from being intimidated, the group relished the opportunity.

"When you go into the ASICS Institute of Sport Science, it's kind of like going into a Bond villain's castle," →





→ laughs Noorkoiv. “You see all these scientists working away as if they’re going to take over the world, but these guys are just improving, to try and make all of the fabrics and materials we’re using better. Even after jerseys are produced and gone, they’re still testing it to see what we can improve for next time and evolve things.”

Every Test side is flogging their latest World Cup kit. That’s standard. But the team at ASICS are already pulling apart their work before a ball has been kicked in anger. The workload at the Institute is high, but Noorkoiv insists his company leave no stone unturned, even after the lorries have left with the first supplies of kit.

The process of decking out the stars begins with discussing ideas. By Noorkoiv’s own admission some of

▲ **Map of the stars**
Asics used these dots in their 3D mapping



Lethal runner
Aussie speedster
Israel Folau

their early concepts are too advanced for the current generation of technology at their disposal, so they shelve them for ‘next time’. These designers, fabric technicians and developers aren’t sitting around a whiteboard, though. Theirs is a dynamic, demanding process.

As soon as they decide on the fabric they like, they hit the lab floor. It’s put through the ‘burst strength test’ – basically forcing a ball through the fabric until it bursts. Then the ‘tear strength test’ – the fabric is secured by two clamps that pull in opposite directions until it tears. It’s tested for grip and purchase by being attacked by the scientific equivalent of a sanding belt. Then they go to work on the weight and fit. ASICS believe that at a weight of 189g, their current team jerseys are “the lightest shirt ever to feature at a Rugby World Cup”.

Boots are just as rigorously tested, with ASICS’ current Gel-Lethal Tight Five boot for forwards and Gel-Lethal Speed boot for their niftier team-mates, produced after using 3D mapping of players’ feet, studying biomechanics



On the catwalk
The Springboks
in the shirt

PICS: AFL SPORT, REUTERS/ACTION IMAGES & RORY ALEXANDER

and where pressure points fall and redeveloping industry standards used to produce top-end running shoes. The result of which is a 10mm heel raise on their current boots, which is designed to reduce the risk of injury and help players like Israel Folau get off the mark quicker.

Then, after all this intensive scientific work, the players get to play with, and pick apart, the new products.

During the 2014 Rugby Championship the Wallabies and Springboks had a few sessions with the scientists, on tour and at home. The Boks were also allowed to drop by the 'castle' in Japan to power through some rigorous testing.

"One of my favourite tests while we were there was when Beast (Tendai Mtawarira) and I did the anti-grip test," remembers giant lock Eben Etzebeth, fondly. "We each had a chance to try to hold one another back by pulling on the jersey we were wearing. It was a lot of fun and we had quite a laugh during the test. We are always a little competitive. The test was used to see which fabric, which tightness of shirt and which strength of fabric was the optimum combination for the final design."

It's no surprise the South African players enjoyed their time in Japan – no doubt their first experience of trying rare Kobe beef had a little something to do with that – and between spiritual trips to Buddhist temples (once during a monsoon) and coaching Japanese school kids, the work at the lab was fascinating. It was helpful too. You see, while they may not know it, these elite players come with strict requirements for their kit. So did ASICS fulfil those?

"The anti-grab technology is very noticeable," insists Etzebeth of the new jersey. "There is a real strength and resistance to the shirt, making it hard for opponents to use the shirt to hold onto you. This is due to the smooth surface which the jersey is made from."

"We also asked ASICS if they could help us with gripping the ball a little better. They used this insight to develop the unique placement of the Super-Grip silicone which are positioned down the ribcage rather than on the chest, and are made from hexagonal shapes that help us grip the ball better when we are holding it high (heading into contact).

"Also personally, I require a lot more of a stable platform from my boots. The 10mm raise in the heel gives us a really comfortable and high-performance boot."

Sounds like Christmas came early for Etzebeth, but again we are in danger of missing the finer details. What



▲ **Full power**
Etzebeth and
Mtawarira test the
jersey's strength

Etzebeth doesn't mention is that the shirt can be gripped by team-mates – the grips on the ribcage 'lock' the locks together at scrum time, but the fabric is designed to 'snap back into shape' if there is any torsion or twist, like when opponents attempt to grab a handful and pull you down.

For Noorkoiv, this is why allowing the elite athletes to road test their products is important – even if, with the case of trying out some unique compression socks, a number of samples hastily disappeared after training.

"One of the best examples is when we took the jerseys to the players the first time and we were really happy with it,

"IT WAS A LOT OF FUN AND WE HAD QUITE A LAUGH DURING THE TEST"

but then they said, 'This is all going really well, but we can't actually hold on to each other.' The locks couldn't get any purchase, their hands kept slipping in the scrum. We didn't think of that as we put the point of purchase on the waist-band. So we solved that by changing the construction, but it just goes to show how you cannot just sit in your lab coat back in the office – you have to ask.

"We analysed the way they were catching, passing, binding, driving forward, and created all the grip placements – the optimal points as we saw them – then tested it with the guys. For 85% of the placements we were bang on. But there were a few little tweaks. Without the guys' honest feedback we couldn't have done it. Because sometimes you work with athletes and they say, 'Yeah, it's cool', but they were really good throughout the whole process. They really helped to shape the jersey. Without the help of both squads we couldn't have done it."

By Noorkoiv's estimate, the Wallabies and Springboks jerseys passed through around a hundred pairs of hands before they were finished. The boots received just as much attention. These are two of the most impressive Test teams in the world and they are backed up by a large team of scientists even Bond would be impressed by.

● See more on South Africa's RWC preparations (P56).

▼ **Driving force**
Etzebeth with the
Asics scientists





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— CHEIKA, MATE! —

Fluent in four languages, a friend of fashion designers and a successful businessman— there's more to Australia coach **MICHAEL CHEIKA** than meets the eye...



FOR SOMEONE who never saw himself as a coach (Wallaby icon David Campese first suggested him for a job) and doesn't need to coach (he's a self-made millionaire), Michael Cheika has proved a damn successful one.

He's the only coach to win a premier club competition in both hemispheres, guiding Leinster to their first Heineken Cup title in 2009 and the Waratahs to Super Rugby glory in 2014, while last month Australia won the Rugby Championship less than a year after he took charge of the team, beating New Zealand for the first time in 11 attempts in the process. →

➔ Cheika is not one to sing his own praises. He won't even pick out a coaching highlight, preferring to focus on the next challenge and insisting retirement is when you look back on what you've achieved. However, a look at his background and coaching style provides an insight into why he's been so successful...

ON TREND

A rampaging No 8 for Randwick, Cheika also turned out for clubs in Italy and France during the late Eighties and early Nineties, "playing all year round". There came a point, however, when he wanted to spend more time at home in Australia and needed to get a job.

He hadn't gone on to higher education after leaving school but had family who worked in the fashion industry and found out that Australian designer Collette Dinnigan was looking for someone who could speak French and Italian. He may not have been a keen follower of clothing trends but his language skills – as the son of Lebanese immigrants he can speak Arabic as well as English, French and Italian – meant he was the perfect fit. "I ran the business side of things – logistics, finance, all the normal stuff you have in any business," he explains. "They're not all creatives!"

After that initial break, Cheika went on to work for another designer before setting up his own clothing company, Live Fashion, which has proved very profitable. In the meantime, former team-mate Campese



▲ **Making a splash** Adam Ashley-Cooper is the most-capped current Wallaby

got in touch to ask whether he fancied a coaching gig in Padova, his fluency in Italian again a key factor.

"I was working for Collette at the time and was still playing here in Sydney," he recalls. "Campo asked if I'd be interested in coaching in Italy as he knew I spoke the language. I'd never thought about coaching but I said, 'Why not? I enjoy rugby and could test myself in a different environment. If I like it, I'll keep doing it.' And I had a great time in Padova. It worked for me."

NORTH v SOUTH

Padova was the start of his coaching journey but there have been several stops since in both hemispheres. And it's not just his rugby experience that has helped him as a coach – he's also drawn on his business background. "People management and personal skills are key. Whether in business or sport, you're just



PICS: GETTY IMAGES

looking to get the best out of people. I have experience of doing that with my own business and rugby. You learn how to handle people to get the best out of them."

It's the man-management that Test centurion George Smith sees as Cheika's greatest strength. Wasps' new flanker worked with Cheika at Stade Français and has also been in touch with the coach to discuss his World Cup availability. Smith says: "I find Cheiks to be a very good man-manager. He has the utmost respect for players and understands them on and off the field. He has a good feeling for that aspect of management."

"I enjoyed his coaching style. He's the type of person who will give you constructive advice. In my experience, he's very measured and thinks carefully about what he's going to say. He doesn't shoot from the hip."

That has not always been the case. Cheika was very vocal about his displeasure at refereeing decisions when a late Harlequins try cost Stade the European Challenge Cup title in 2011 – he was fined for verbally abusing officials – and Shane Jennings has spoken of how he would go "f***ing bananas" if Leinster underperformed. Yet he has always been able to inspire his teams.

As Brian O'Driscoll told *Rugby World* a few years ago: "What amazed me was, after five years as coach, his team talks never became repetitive. He was always able to captivate his audience and that's not easy with a long tenure. He's a very good coach and a very good speaker."

The praise may be plentiful, particularly from those at Leinster who saw him transform the province from perennial underachievers to European champions, but there was still an element of self-doubt when he returned Down Under in 2013. Could the tactics employed in Europe prove as effective in Super Rugby?

"I was petrified when I came back to coach the Waratahs because I'd never coached at that level in the southern hemisphere," he admits. "I'd seen games on

▲ **United front**
Cheika joins his players
to sing the anthem

**"I STILL THINK TEAMS
WILL SEE THE SCRUM AS
A WEAKNESS OF OURS"**

TV and they looked pretty different, and I wasn't sure if what I had in my kitbag would work. I learnt pretty quickly and (assistant coach) Daryl Gibson showed me what was required in Super Rugby. Nathan Grey helped me as well because he was experienced in Super Rugby. Test level is a different challenge again now."

THE ULTIMATE TEST

Cheika was named Australia coach last October following Ewen McKenzie's resignation and was thrust straight into an end-of-year tour. After guiding the Waratahs to the Super Rugby play-offs again this year, he has taken the Australia reins full-time and has quickly put his unique imprint on things.

Take the decision for the coaching team to line up alongside their players for the anthem ahead of the Rugby Championship decider against the All Blacks – an extremely unfamiliar sight. It's a quirk they repeated the following week, when they lost 41-13 to the world champions. We'll have to wait to see whether they continue the display of solidarity during the World Cup but Cheika says: "It was a last-minute decision. I wanted my team to feel like we were with them, that we weren't judging them. It worked out to be a great experience."

Another example of Cheika doing things differently is his World Cup squad selection, going against the norm by selecting only two specialist hookers and scrum-halves. It's been called a calculated risk and the hooker call, in particular, has raised a few eyebrows. Still, there have been notable improvements in the scrum for Australia, although Cheika is quick to play down such talk ahead of their tussles in Pool A.

"I don't think England and Wales will be worried about our scrum. It's up to us to improve in that area and be up for the battle. I still think teams over there will see it as a big weakness of ours and will target us."

CHEIKA'S COACHING CIRCLE



NATHAN GREY

The stats 35 Australia caps at centre between 1998 and 2003, scoring seven tries and appearing in both RWC 1999 and 2003

Responsibility Defence

Experience Assistant coach at Melbourne Rebels for two years before becoming NSW Waratahs defence coach in 2013

Known for Shoring up both the Rebels' and Waratahs' defence, with Cheika saying he had "done a remarkable job during his time in Super Rugby" when handing him a Wallabies role.



STEPHEN LARKHAM

The stats A Wallaby centurion with 102 caps (1996-2007). The fly-half played in three World Cups, including the 1999 triumph, and scored 135 points (25T, 2C, 2DG) in Test rugby

Responsibility Attack and backs

Experience Became assistant coach at the Brumbies in 2011 and took the head coach reins this year, guiding the franchise to the Super Rugby semi-finals

Known for Taking his on-field creativity as a playmaker into coaching as well as having a "deep understanding" of what is needed to succeed at Test level.



MARIO LEDESMA

The stats A veteran of four World Cups, winning 84 caps and scoring three tries at hooker for Argentina from 1996 to 2011

Responsibility Set-piece

Experience Worked as forwards coach with Stade Français and Montpellier in the French Top 14 after retiring, and also helped out at the Waratahs this season

Known for His passion for the scrum – and getting his point across. His aim is for Australia to show they "want a contest".

▼ **New heights**
Israel Folau excels under the high ball

One area where Cheika has been consistent throughout his career is his desire to play an entertaining, ball-in-hand game. The Wallabies have a plethora of playmakers and with players like Israel Folau, Quade Cooper and Matt Giteau in the squad,

it's a strategy that makes sense. The difficulty has been trying to unpick the more organised defences on the international stage.

"I've always played a running style of game, a very attacking style of game, but obviously it becomes more and more difficult at Test level. There are much better defenders and less holes to get into, so you can run up dark alleys. The challenge is to get variation in the way we play and get the guys enjoying that style."

"We've had a good period of time training together and have been improving – and we should be improving, otherwise I wouldn't be doing my job. I'm happy that as a group we're enjoying ourselves and are getting better together."

Whatever happens during this World Cup, Cheika is sure to do things his way. After all, it's proved mightily effective so far. **RW**





WORDS: FRANKIE DEGES MAIN PIC: MARTY MELVILLE/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

"WE COULD GO ONE STEP FURTHER THAN 2007"

Pumas captain Agustín Creevy has already triumphed with Worcester this year and now he's backing Argentina to make history...

AGUSTÍN CREEVY would rather describe himself as a fighter than a survivor. Both descriptions fit the captain who aims to take Argentina where they have never gone before in a Rugby World Cup. At 30, the likeable hooker

will arrive at the biggest of tournaments in charge of a team with big ambitions. "We not only want to repeat what Argentina did in 2007, we want to win the World Cup," he says with a huge smile. He exudes confidence yet acknowledges that the task ahead is far from easy.

After little more than a year as captain, he seems to have fitted into the job comfortably. His rugby story is not your normal one, though. As a strong, ball-carrying flanker, Creevy made waves for his club San Luis in La Plata, with whom he made his senior debut in 2004. The following year was an important one as he played his first two Tests, against Japan and Samoa, aged 20.

That same year, he played in what was then the IRB U21 World Championship in Mendoza. That tournament produced 75 full internationals, including current team-mates Horacio Agulla and Marcelo Bosch as well as Adam Ashley-Cooper, James Haskell, Damien Chouly, Johnny Sexton, Alun Wyn Jones, Kieran Read and Ruan Pienaar.

As RWC 2007 approached, however, Creevy was out of the Test picture, with bigger players preferred. "I missed the first cut, didn't even make it to the preparation squad," he recalls. →

THE FACTS

AGUSTÍN CREEVY

Age 30 (15 Mar 1985)

Born La Plata

Position Hooker

Height 6ft

Weight 17st 4lb

Argentina caps 40

Points Ten (2T)

Twitter @agustincreevy

➔ He took his talent to Biarritz in the hope of greater exposure but two years there did not bring the expected game time; in 2007-08 he played in seven games whilst the following season he managed only 20 minutes of Top 14 rugby. Difficult decisions had to be made.

With his Biarritz career stalled as a blindside, when asked if he might consider moving up front in a bid to revive his Test career, he seized his chance. He upped sticks, returned home to play at amateur level with San Luis and started all over again, this time with the support of the national set-up. By late 2009 he had come off the bench against Scotland and in 2010 he led the Pampas XV in the Vodacom Cup in South Africa.

"I had to discover a new position and understand the game from a different position. It was very hard, physically painful at times and mentally tiring, but it got me here, so it was a good choice," he says.

Back living with his parents, he used one of the house's walls as a lineout target. It would take him thousands of throws to master the lineout, which has been an Achilles heel of Argentine play for many years. Things are better now as Creevy has grown in confidence.

Argentina's scrum resurgence in recent games has been noticeable too. The old *bajada* (eight-man shove) has been updated by scrum coach and former Bristol prop Emiliano Bergamaschi – and has brought a lot of



"I HAVE BEEN THROUGH EVERY UP AND DOWN, SO I CAN UNDERSTAND PLAYERS' FEELINGS"

pride back to the team. As much as the scrum depends on each and every player in the pack, the hooker spearheads it. Creevy, a No 2 only since 2009, says: "It is about being patient, about taking the opposition front row as low as you can so that they are uncomfortable."

The flip side is that it is impossible to hook the ball quickly. Not a problem. "If we're dominating the scrum, we don't need it. We walk over the ball. Even if it's not a quick ball, it's an important part of the forward battle that is won." It has happened against the mammoth Springboks pack, the Wallabies and the French; it can happen all the time. It is all in the head, insists Creevy. As we've said, he has a fighter's mentality.



Having patiently served his Test apprenticeship under Mario Ledesma, the current Wallabies forward coach, and started only two Internationals out of his first 28, Creevy had been in line to make the first XV when the inaugural Rugby Championship came around in 2012 and Ledesma's 15-year career had finished. It wasn't to be; in the last warm-up game, a rib injury saw him lose pole position. He has no regrets about how long he had to bide his time, saying: "Things happen for a reason."

At the start of last year's Rugby Championship, he was named captain and started the six games. That all came after internal strife. Previous coach Santiago Phelan resigned a few months before his contract ended. In came Daniel Hourcade with a comprehensive CV, including coaching Argentina at every level bar Pumas and being Portugal's assistant coach at RWC 2007.

"Daniel Hourcade's vision is one that I share and it took the team a few games to make it our vision," says Creevy. "I know what his rugby is about and he's brought a new dimension to our set-piece, our attack is inventive and we are again playing for each other."

As for the captaincy, it came as a surprise, more so as it meant that the new coach had released Toulon star Juan Fernández Lobbe from the job. "It is a huge honour, one that makes me very happy," he smiles. "I have to say that Juan gave me his full support and I couldn't have more respect for him. He always puts the team's interests ahead of his own. It is great to have him around."

"I have been through every up and down, sat on the bench, missed selection for a World Cup, been injured at

◀ Back-row days
Creevy on the hoof for
Argentina U21 in 2006



Party time
The Pumas' celebrate their first-ever win over the Boks last month

the wrong time. So I can understand the feelings of those who are playing and those who aren't, what they are thinking, what will be good for them. As a leader I might speak with my closest mates in the team but it will always be my decision."

Already this year he has helped Worcester triumph in the Greene King IPA Championship play-offs and secure promotion to the Aviva Premiership. "We'd been relegated from the Premiership the previous season. Even though I could have left, I stuck with the club and wanted to take them back to where they belong."

For the time being, his wife, a lawyer, will continue to live in Cheltenham and work in the UK, but earlier this

year he signed for the Argentine Super Rugby franchise, underpinning the whole project with his commitment.

"It's going into a new world, but it will be great to be a part of it. Signing that contract was like living a dream. Since I left Argentina to play overseas (he also had stints in Clermont in 2010-11 and Montpellier in 2011-13 as a hooker), I've dreamt of being able to play professionally in my country, close to my family, my club and friends."

For now, Creevy faces the task of leading his nation into the World Cup, and last month's historic win in South Africa has given them a shot in the arm. "It's a hard pool but one we should be able to advance from. We start against the All Blacks but we've played them eight times since 2011 and that is a great help mentally. Georgia are a hard team but we should be able to go into that game with confidence, as against Tonga and Namibia."

Should they finish second in Pool C, as expected, it will be to Cardiff for the quarter-final, where they will play the Pool D winners, most likely Ireland or France. "Both those teams are very hard, but at that stage it is about 80 minutes, the moment, the day. Why not give our team a chance? We have a great blend of young and old, hungry and experienced. We're very similar to the team from 2007; we could even go one step further."

We all remember what happened to that team... they flew home with a bronze medal around their necks. **RW**



Target practice
Working on his throw

RETURNING HEROES

Key players who have joined Argentina's new Super Rugby team



Agustín Creevy

The captain became the first Europe-based player to sign for the Argentine franchise. He agreed a three-year deal and will lead the team from the front, true to his personality.



Juan Martín Hernández

A shining star of Argentine rugby for a decade. He turns 33 next year and will be able to fulfil a dream – to play Super Rugby. His last attempt, with the Sharks, turned into an injury nightmare.



Lucas González Amoroso

Remembered for his sidestepping try v Scotland at RWC 2011, he was a late recruit. Two years with Leicester, two with Montpellier and one with each of Oyonnax and Cardiff Blues speak of his experience.



Joaquín Tuculeit

After a couple of quiet seasons in France, he came of age back in Argentina and moved to Cardiff Blues. From full-back he shows the class already available in Super Rugby but new to Argentine rugby.



Ramiro Herrera

Having arrived as a medical joker, he propped in the Castres scrum to win the Top 14 in 2013. After two seasons with the French outfit, he now returns to try his luck in Super Rugby.



Tomás Lavanini

A 6ft 7in, 20st 7lb mass of manic aggression, the lock will want to prove his doubters wrong. He spent a season with Racing but chose to return to join the franchise and will be just 22 when Super Rugby starts.



Juan Manuel Leguizamón

After ten years as a pro (three at London Irish, three at Stade and four with Lyon), he returns to end his career in Argentina. He will add experience to a youthful squad.

STEPHEN JONES

RUGBY'S MOST OUTSPOKEN AND INFLUENTIAL JOURNALIST



“Namibians are tough rugby people, products of a tough environment”

The African minnows may struggle to compete during the World Cup, but Stephen Jones believes there are plenty of strong characters in Namibia

THERE WERE fond hopes in those far off days of 1987 when the first World Cup was staged that the relatively small number of true top-class rugby nations would grow and grow so that by, say, 2015 there would be ten or more real contenders, and the second and third divisions of the global game would have advanced strongly.

No one can doubt the progress that rugby is making. Almost every day I have to scratch my head in wonder at the eruption in interest in the sport around the globe and the number of people

who are taking up the game – it is, for the moment, another story that the way the game is being played may well end the rush. Let us leave that for another time. The overwhelming disappointment is the lack of progress by any team outside the top echelon with the exception of Argentina, who were actually always a top nation at heart anyway. When you look at the chances

of Namibia and Uruguay in this tournament, instead of predicting victories or praying that they put up fantastic resistance in their pool games, you find yourself praying that they all come through safely. Against the professional monsters in the top teams, there must be real danger of serious injury.

Going back to the 2007 World Cup in France, I remember that behind the scenes, officials of the IRB (now World Rugby) were in a panic that Portugal's amateurs would come to serious harm against New Zealand. It is to the credit of the All Blacks that they pulled their punches when playing them.

Last season, amongst all the interviews I conducted, easily the most fascinating was with Danie Vermeulen, then head coach of Namibia. He was the most honest, charming and engaging person I met in rugby. We sat down together in Colwyn Bay, to where the Namibian team had been banished to play a friendly match against Canada. You have to hand it to the world of rugby – there is no danger of them ever making anything easy for the smaller teams.

Vermeulen had to put up with having his men together for short periods, often for only a matter of

► **Battle wounds**
Tinus du Plessis at the end of Namibia's RWC qualifying campaign



→ days when the sprinkling of professional players could train with the rump, drawn from Namibia's rather scattered and fitful amateur game.

As Jacques Burger, the national captain and hard-hitting Saracens flanker who started all Namibia's RWC games in 2007 and 2011, said in Colwyn Bay: "We have nothing like the facilities of the other teams. We have only one physio."

Vermeulen's target was simple. Namibia have played in four World Cups to date and won no matches. "The ambition must be to win one game, and then maybe even two," he said. "If we can get the boys together and emphasise our strengths, there is no reason why we should not win a game."

Then you looked at their pool. They play New Zealand, Argentina, Georgia and Tonga, all of them way above Namibia in the world rankings. You fear desperately for them, you cannot see where they could possibly come close to victory. It's all very well nominating Georgia as a soft touch but the Georgians are one team who could well astound us with their improvement.

Then, less than three months before the World Cup, came the news that Vermeulen was leaving his post. The official Rugby World Cup website pointed out that he had "resigned in the aftermath of the World Rugby Nations Cup campaign". It's true that heavy defeats by Romania, the Jaguars (Argentina's second string) and even lowly Spain was hardly a recommendation – they conceded 14 tries in three games – although Vermeulen didn't have his professional players available.

But insiders say that Vermeulen objected to interference from the Namibian Rugby Union in his selections, and even though it would take a full-scale investigation to check out that assertion, you would not bet against it. Phil Davies, the grand old Welsh forward who has coached in many professional locations, moved up from adviser to head coach and is desperately trying to put together a decent structure for the present and future of Namibian rugby.

Whatever the reasons behind his departure, I was profoundly sorry to hear that Vermeulen was going. He was about to become the first coach ever to guide a team in the World Cup from a wheelchair.

Vermeulen was an outstanding prop: he represented Namibia from his early twenties, he played Super



"WE HAVE NOTHING LIKE THE FACILITIES OF THE OTHER TEAMS"

▲ **Burger king**
Jacques Burger is the rugged face of Namibia

Rugby for the Golden Cats in Johannesburg and was so good that he was snapped up by Dax in France. He stayed only one year. "None of the coaches and only a few of the players spoke English," he said of his time at the club. Soon after that, he returned to South Africa and was asked to play for the South African Barbarians, and the authorities saw this as a way to bring him into the Springboks squad.

Fatefully, he decided not to accept the selection. He had been away from Namibia for some time, wanted to visit his family and, later that weekend, he decided to drive to a wildlife auction. On the way back, driving along a dirt road, a tyre burst and the vehicle flipped over. He broke his back and was rendered paraplegic.

Listening to his experiences since made you feel more hope for Namibia, if only he could pass on his tenacity. "I had been living and playing with all that adrenaline and suddenly I was sitting around with all these emotions and nowhere to go, probably not feeling like a man, not being the one who could provide," he said.

He spent a year burning with frustration but eventually returned to the game and took up coaching. His tribulations were just beginning. Namibia is almost entirely unfriendly for wheelchair users. He told me about the time he parked in a multi-storey – when he returned cars had parked alongside him on each side so that he couldn't get his wheelchair back in. He had to wait nearly two hours for one of the drivers to come back.

But if Namibia was a nightmare in terms of its disabled facilities, then consider his experiences in the rest of Africa. The Namibian team he gradually improved had to go to distant Senegal as part of the RWC qualification process. Then they had to go through final qualifying in Madagascar. Somehow, he managed to access the areas that were necessary and, typically, he did not dwell on his own misfortunes.

"It is very important in life to realise what you have. At least in Senegal most of the people had shoes, although the changing rooms were so bad you could not go into them. In Madagascar, many people were barefoot, some of the deprivation was very difficult to take," he said.

And all this is why, with the greatest respect to a decent man and an excellent coach such as Davies, I will miss Vermeulen at the World Cup and hope that →

▼ **Prep work**
Conrad Marais takes on Romania in June





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➔ Namibian rugby followers and the game in general will recognise the part he played against the odds in delivering Namibia to the starting line.

It will come as no surprise that the build-up is too dislocated to be called fractured. Davies points out that it was only in February that the vast bulk of the team even began a weights programme and very few of them had been on such a regime before. Their main pre-tournament build-up consisted of a two-match series against Russia in Windhoek, which they won 2-0 in emphatic style with 39-19 and 45-5 triumphs.

So it is not all grim news. Namibians are tough rugby people, products of a tough environment. Burger's leadership is usually superhuman, with its complete disregard for self-preservation. Sometimes you close your eyes as he arrives in the vicinity of the ball.

They have a handful of players familiar to followers in Europe. Tinus du Plessis has experience at Wasps, where he was impressive although not quite good enough to shift any of the illustrious Wasps back row to gain a regular starting spot. Du Plessis is in the mould of Burger when it comes to commitment. Namibia also have the Exeter Chiefs full-back Chrysander Botha, who

has only recently returned to fitness after breaking his leg and dislocating his ankle last November. It may have been a disappointing personal campaign, but simply to be an Exeter Chief under the regime of Rob Baxter is a recommendation in itself. Baxter's art of spotting talented players almost unheard of in the vicinity, let alone the rest of the world, is outstanding.

There is some good coaching expertise alongside Davies as well in the shape of Pieter Rossouw, formerly a lanky but highly effective Springbok wing. He and Davies have had very little time in which to bond and impose themselves and there is no finance to gild the lily.

But you do hope that they find ways to run at least one of their more illustrious opponents close, that they can do wonders for Namibian rugby simply by competing with teams who have at least 20 times the number of players and 50 times the financial resources.

We all love an underdog, as we keep telling ourselves. However, while offering Namibia all our best wishes, we should also make it known that we are tired of underdogs being underdogs because no one will go to their aid. In particular, I hope that the Namibia team do Danie Vermeulen proud. **RM**

▲ **Positive influence**
Vermeulen inspired
Namibia's players

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COMPETITION

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Here's your chance to win **£300**-worth of clothing from Raging Bull

THE TONGAN team will be looking sharp off the field at this autumn's World Cup thanks to Raging Bull.

The challenge of dressing the big lads in the team was one Phil Vickery's clothing company met with ease, as Raging Bull's lifestyle collection is available in sizes small to 6XL. So Tonga will look well-dressed at their off-field engagements.

To celebrate their collaboration with the Tonga squad, Raging Bull are giving you the chance to win

£300-worth of Raging Bull clothing, plus a ball signed by Phil Vickery. The winner will be able to choose items they want from the website – visit ragingbull.co.uk to check out

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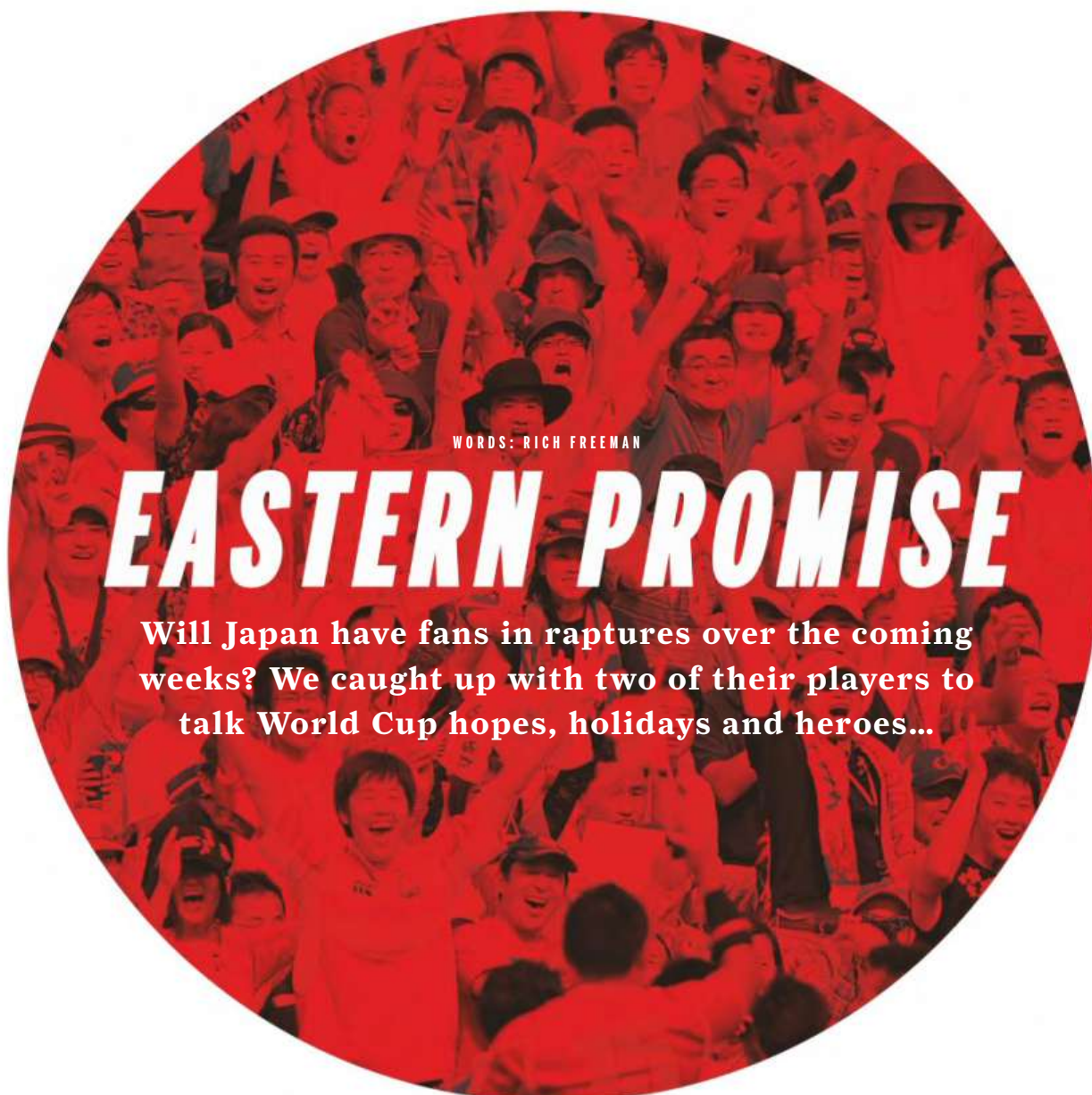
1. Which year did Phil Vickery captain England at the World Cup?
2. What is the size range for Raging Bull?



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WORDS: RICH FREEMAN

EASTERN PROMISE

Will Japan have fans in raptures over the coming weeks? We caught up with two of their players to talk World Cup hopes, holidays and heroes...

W

ITH A professional league and the World Cup arriving on their shores in 2019, Japanese rugby is certainly heading in the right direction. But despite playing in every tournament to date, Japan have won only one World Cup game, beating Zimbabwe 52-8 in 1991. As they go in search of a second win at RWC 2015, we caught up with two of their players – fly-half/centre Kosei Ono, who was part of the Brave Blossoms' 2007 squad, and No 8 Ryu Koiniasi Holani, who played in their 2011 campaign...

Rugby World: Where were you born?

Kosei Ono: Nagoya, but we moved to New Zealand when I was two and a half. We spoke Japanese at home but as soon as I was out the door it was English. That's probably why my Japanese isn't as good as it should be. My speaking is okay but my reading and writing could be →

➔ better. But I had a great experience and have the best of both cultures. I'm lucky to have met a lot of different people that I wouldn't have if I'd stayed in one place.

Ryu Koliniasi Holani: I was born in Tonga and came to Japan when I was 15 to attend high school. It was tough at first as I didn't know a single word of the language and it was hard to make friends. But once I made them, they were the best friends I've had. I've now been in Japan longer than I lived in Tonga, so it feels like home here.

My brother and I added Ryu (meaning 'dragon') to our name when we became Japanese citizens. It seemed the right thing to do. Most people still call me Koli though.

RW: Aside from playing for Japan, what honours have you achieved in rugby?

RKH: I played for the Barbarians this year, which was really fun and the best of times. Everyone enjoyed themselves both on and off the field. The other players

"I DIDN'T KNOW A SINGLE WORD OF THE LANGUAGE"

were really classy and professional. They enjoyed the night and then turned up for training or for the match. The second game (against England) didn't go that well but we were only together for a short time and I am sure we could have done better if we'd had more time.

KO: I played age-group rugby for Canterbury from U10 to U19. I played No 12 at school as we had Stephen Brett and Colin Slade at fly-half. I also played alongside Owen Franks and half-a-dozen Super Rugby players.

RW: What's your best rugby moment?

RKH: The first time that Sanyo (as Panasonic were known then) won the All Japan Championship, I injured my arm after 20 minutes. I went off for ten minutes and came back on even though I couldn't lift my arm. I ended up

scoring two tries – I just put the ball under the arm and it stayed there – and we won.

KO: When Christchurch Boys' High School first XV beat Christ College – our rivals – by the biggest-ever margin.

RW: Who has been your toughest opponent?

RKH: As a team, the All Blacks. Best individual was George Smith, so it was really good to play alongside him for the Barbarians. He was good everywhere – in attack, defence and hard to stop, but really fun to play alongside.



Making big strides
Holani tests Scotland's defence



Leaps and bounds
Tanaka enjoys victory over Wales in 2013

KO: Kin-chan (Hitoshi Ono). I respect how tough he is and how he has played like that week in, week out for so long. I was lucky to play alongside George Smith at Suntory. At training he would never get physical but you just knew what he was capable of.

RW: What are your hopes for the World Cup?

RKH: Four years ago I got injured after 25 minutes against France and ended up having to watch the rest of the tournament. As a team, we did our best but we were probably unprepared for everything that the World Cup presents.

This time round, we have a lot more strength in depth, so if we have to rotate players it doesn't hurt us as much. We also had the benefit of going to England in April so we'll be used to the hotels and grounds. One thing I'm sure of is that the crowds will be loud. Maybe even louder than in New Zealand.

KO: Eight years ago, I had just turned 20 and was unprepared for what we were coming up against as I was thrown into things quite late. In France, everything – the players, the rugby, the people, the competition – was new to me.

This time it has been something I have been thinking about for three or four years, so I am better prepared. I also think I will enjoy it a lot more.

RW: What's your most embarrassing moment?

KO: A few years ago when we played Panasonic I put my tooth through my chin. I ended up being taped up all around my jaw and head and wearing extra large headgear. There was blood everywhere and I wasn't exactly the pretty boy fly-half.

I've also probably missed a few kicks in front of the posts over the years.

THE FACTS RYU KOLINIASI HOLANI

Age 33 (25 Oct 1981)
Born Nuku'alofa, Tonga
Position No 8
Club Panasonic
Wild Knights
Japan caps 40
Debut v Kazakhstan, 08
Points 115 (23T)



RKH: I agree. Those times when you get taped up. You just can't wait to get it all off after the game.

RW: How do you switch off from rugby in your spare time?

RKH: I like to take my dog for a walk. I have a Weimaraner, which is a hunting dog. His name is Hulk and even though he is only seven months old, he is getting big. I used to go running with him but now I ride my bike and he runs alongside.

KO: I like to play golf if I can. I also have a dog, but it's a Miniature Schnauzer so it's not really a dog like Koli's.

RW: What's your favourite TV show?

RKH: I don't really watch a lot of TV. Once the kids go to bed I sometimes watch a variety show or a comedy show but nothing really in particular.

KO: I've started watching *Game of Thrones* – I'm at season four – but that's about it. I don't watch TV in Japan. In fact, the TV isn't even plugged in. That's probably why my Japanese hasn't got any better.

RW: If you weren't a rugby player, what other sport would you like to play professionally?

KO: I'd like to be a pro golfer. I play with my wife when I get the chance and I've had a few rounds with Suntory club-mate Fourie du Preez. But he's really good. The last time we played, I shot 90 and he went round in 73.

RKH: No sport really. I used to play a lot of music and when I first arrived in Japan on an academic scholarship I played the trombone.

RW: Who was your childhood rugby hero?

RKH: My uncle Nofomuli Taumoevalau. Along with Epi Taione's uncle, they were the first Tongans to come

to Japan to play rugby in 1979.

I remember I was five or six and I saw Nofomuli play on the wing for Japan at the first Rugby World Cup.

KO: Andrew Mehrtens. He was an old boy of my school, Christchurch Boys' High School, and obviously went on to play for

Canterbury and the All Blacks. He used to pop into the school but I haven't seen him recently.

RW: Who would you like to meet?

KO: I'd like to sit down and have a pint of Guinness with Rory McIlroy. Bearing in mind his recent injury, I could also ask him about his rehab.

RKH: Someone with really bad knees like me. I want to know what they do for rehab and what they do in the weeks and days leading up to a game.

RW: What's the best holiday you've been on?

KO: Akaroa, which is outside Christchurch. It's a small beach/harbour town. My wife's parents have a house there, and it's nice and quiet. I must be getting old.

RKH: Fiji or Guam, because I can go there and no one knows who I am and no one bothers me.

RW: Tell us a surprising fact about yourself...

RKH: That I speak Japanese fluently. Tongan is my first language, Japanese second and English third.

KO: That I speak English fluently.

RW: Which team-mate would you like to be?

KO: Probably (prop) Kensuke Hatakeyama. He's a really entertaining guy who knows how to keep a conversation going and is well liked by everyone.

RKH: Anyone in the squad except (scrum-half)

Fumiaki Tanaka. He's too cheeky! 

THE FACTS

KOSEI ONO

Age 28 (17 April 1987)

Born Aichi, Japan

Position Fly-half/centre

Club Suntory

Sungoliath

Japan caps 27

Debut v Korea, 2007

Pts 33 (4T, 2C, 2P, 1DG)



Go, go Ono
Kosei Ono launches an attack

PICS: GETTY IMAGES & REUTERS/ACTION IMAGES

DOCTORS, ACCOUNTANTS, FARMERS &

WORDS: FRANKIE DEGES MAIN PICTURE: PABLO PORCIUNCULA/AFP



A GREENGROCER...

Meet Uruguay – a team of amateurs facing the toughest pool in World Cup history



A SA doctor Nicolás Klappenbach needs to be very precise with his daily schedule. He works as a traumatology surgeon, with a military battalion and in a private practice. He also happens to be the Uruguay hooker for the World Cup, so he's had to add the rugby calendar to his already busy schedule.

"It's hard, but it can be done," says the captain without complaint. His wife Leticia is a paediatrician so she understands how tough it is. "She committed to working longer hours in the build-up to the World Cup as before arriving in England we were based in the Basque Country and played two Tests in Japan, being away from home for about a month." With an 18-month-old daughter, Leticia has moved back into her parents' home and the Klappenbachs will have to reduce their expenses for a few months after the tournament.

Loosehead prop Alejo Corral, Argentina-born but Uruguay-raised, lives on the other side of the River Plate where he works in the communications department of the Buenos Aires City Government. His boss is running for the country's presidency in October and there is more work than ever in his office. Fortunately, there are a few rugby people in the government and they happily signed his release when he pledged to take an unpaid leave of absence for three months.

"What's better than playing in a Rugby World Cup?" he asks without expecting an answer. "I've played for Uruguay for so long that this is the icing on the cake. I would do anything not to miss it. I will have to come home with a few thank you souvenirs."

The story of these players in Uruguay's 31-man RWC squad, and another few who missed out on selection, is one of commitment: players, management and their families have put their full weight behind the project. No one wanted to miss it. There are all kinds of human interest stories around the most amateur of teams in this World Cup. Not that they want to be known for that; they have been working tirelessly since beating Russia in Montevideo last →



DID YOU KNOW?

Uruguay beat an Argentina XV 30-26 in Montevideo last month. It was their first-ever victory over a senior Argentine team.

→ November to secure their place in Pool A with Australia, England, Fiji and Wales. At least ten players have had to make huge commitments not to lose their jobs while others have simply resigned. You have your accountants, webmasters, doctors, businessmen, farmers, veterinarians, students, even a greengrocer. There are only a handful of Europe-based professionals.

Talking of sacrifices, flanker Mathias Braun convinced his fiancée to postpone moving in together. A chemical engineer, he also resigned from his job in a tannery. He says: "I tried to fit the rugby commitments and my job, and it wasn't possible. With Magdalena, my girlfriend of five years, we decided we'd each stay with our parents as it would have been too expensive to rent a flat right now."

URUGUAY FIRST played in a World Cup in 1999, repeated the feat in 2003 and missed out on qualification at the last hurdle for 2007 against Portugal and 2011 against Romania. You could say coach Pablo Lemoine epitomises Uruguay's connection with the tournament – 18 of his 48 caps were for the Rugby World Cup, seven in the two tournaments and 11 in qualifying rounds.

His commitment to the cause was such that soon after retiring from international rugby – his last Test was against Romania in 2010 – and playing a final season for Montevideo Cricket Club in 2011, he was back in the fold again as national coach. "It is about repaying what rugby has given me," he says in his office under the main stand at the Charrúa Stadium, home of *los Teros*.

As head of rugby at the Uruguayan Rugby Union (URU), he is using his vast knowledge and experience – he played for 12 seasons in Europe – to benefit the game in his country. The road to high performance now starts with the U17s and continues all the way to *los Teros*. "We've been working hard to give players an environment in which they can prepare to excel," says the former Bristol and Stade Français prop. "I wish I could have had something like this in my playing days."

Uruguayan rugby has steadily grown in recent years, the national team flitting between 19th and 22nd in the world rankings. They are a developing nation but play regularly in the World Rugby U20 Trophy and either the Nations or Tbilisi Cup, and when *los Teros* qualified for RWC 2015 they did so in front of their biggest-ever home crowd.

The national union has been proactive in how they've used the money from World Rugby, government funding and some sponsors. Of most significance has been the creation of their High Performance Centre at the Charrúa Stadium, located inside the leafy Parque Rivera in Carrasco, the country's rugby hotbed. URU signed a long-term lease from the government in 2013 and they have invested wisely and heavily to make it a place they can be proud of.

"It is important to play in the Rugby World Cup but we must also



On the up
Uruguay compete for a high ball with an Argentina XV

"WE'LL GO OUT TO WIN. IT'S THE ONLY WAY TO RESPECT THE JERSEY"

work hard on developing our players, growing our base and in doing so working hard in the High Performance Centre," says URU chairman Sebastián Piñeyría.

All this means they will be the best-prepared Uruguay team to leave Montevideo – and the players are thankful as they prepare to go into an uneven battle against three World Cup contenders and a dangerous Fiji side.

Scrum-half Agustín Ormaechea, who plays for Stade Montois in France's ProD2, is happy with what he sees, saying: "There are more resources and everything is in place for players to be at their maximum level.

Touring as a squad in the build-up to the World Cup was important as it allowed us to work on the small details. We were already close as a squad but being on tour is always great to work on teamwork."

Tight bond
Los Teros celebrate RWC 2015 qualification



AFTER A hard first half of the year, in which Uruguay failed to beat bitter rivals Chile and struggled at times in the Tbilisi Cup, the team turned a corner. "January to June was long and heavy duty; we played 11 games but we were setting the platform and were not too worried about performance. That came after, working less on strength and conditioning and more on technical and mental aspects," explains Lemoine.

World Rugby assisted in the final stretch with a fitness consultant, Craig White, and the team worked with a mental skills coach, Eduardo Laurino, which was also a positive experience. Players have accepted the challenge and no one complained about a heavy training schedule

that included double and triple sessions daily before flying to Japan. Rather than regret having such a tough pool, they are basking in the opportunity and prepared to be as close to their opponents' level as they can be.

"When will a team of our standard have the opportunity of playing against Wales, Fiji, Australia or even the host team in a World Cup? We are delighted!" says Lemoine. "It's a World Cup and it will be a struggle, but we'll enjoy it. The goals are always the same: we will go out to win each and every game because it is the only way you can take the field and respect the jersey. The stakes are high but we'll do all we can to be competitive. The scoreline is not something we'll focus on."

Klappenbach adds: "It is an opportunity to test yourself against the best in the world; coming across players such as David Pocock, Sam Warburton, the English captain... What a pleasure! What an honour!"

The captain also dreams of walking out at the Millennium Stadium for *los Teros'* opening game against Wales on Sunday 20 September. "I think about that moment all the time. To play in such a magnificent ground, with the Welsh fans. It will be incredible."

Fly-half Felipe Berchesi, who has played for Uruguay at U18, U19, U20, sevens and senior level with his closest mate Ormaechea, has Cardiff on his mind too. "For years, I used a YouTube video of the Welsh singing their anthem to motivate me and now I will be there, living that video," says the 24-year-old. "I fool around with my mates saying I will have my phone inside my socks to take selfies with my opponents!"

While other teams have negotiated generous deals with their unions, Uruguayans are benefiting from a small stipend distributed by the union to help with their own costs. It is not what could be called a salary, but it helps. It is not close to what Klappenbach would earn as a doctor, but he says: "We didn't ask for money, we were all happy to work hard just for the honour of playing for Uruguay. Money came and we are thankful."

The shared pride of being in England for the World Cup will make them hungry. They all understand that the mountain is too high to climb and that they will be on the end of some big scores. But they don't care. "We hope to do our stuff as best as we can, put teams under pressure and enjoy the experience. At the end of the tournament we will all be better players and the game at home will have grown," concludes Lemoine. **RW**



▲ **Mr Positive**
Uruguay captain
Nicolás Klappenbach

▼ **Crossing paths**
Pablo Lemoine scores
v England in 2003



SIX TO WATCH

The Uruguayans ready to make their mark at RWC 2015

DIEGO MAGNO

He runs his own website business and is closing in on his 50th cap. A flanker who has also played Test rugby at No 8 and lock, he is not shy of throwing himself into the fray.



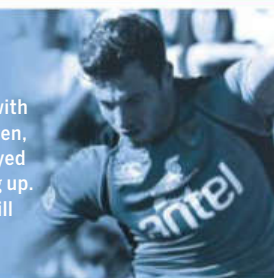
AGUSTÍN ORMAECHEA

He follows in the footsteps of dad Diego and brother Juan Diego. His first four caps were at centre but he's since established himself as first-choice scrum-half. He can kick for goal and is strong-willed.



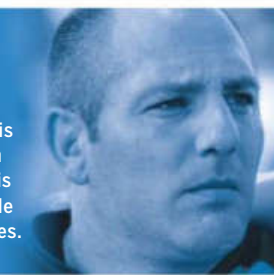
FELIPE BERCHESE

Played 12 of his first 13 Tests with his best mate since kindergarten, Ormaechea (above) – they played in every national team growing up. His polished boot and vision will catch the eye from fly-half.



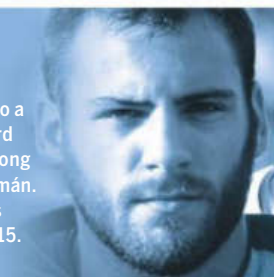
ALEJO CORRAL

The younger brother of former Argentina prop Matías spent his youth in Uruguay and has been first-choice loosehead since his third Test eight seasons ago. He plays club rugby in Buenos Aires.



JOAQUÍN PRADA

His direct running is an asset to a team best known for its forward strength and he's formed a strong centre pairing with Alberto Román. A medical student, he's put his career on hold until after RWC15.

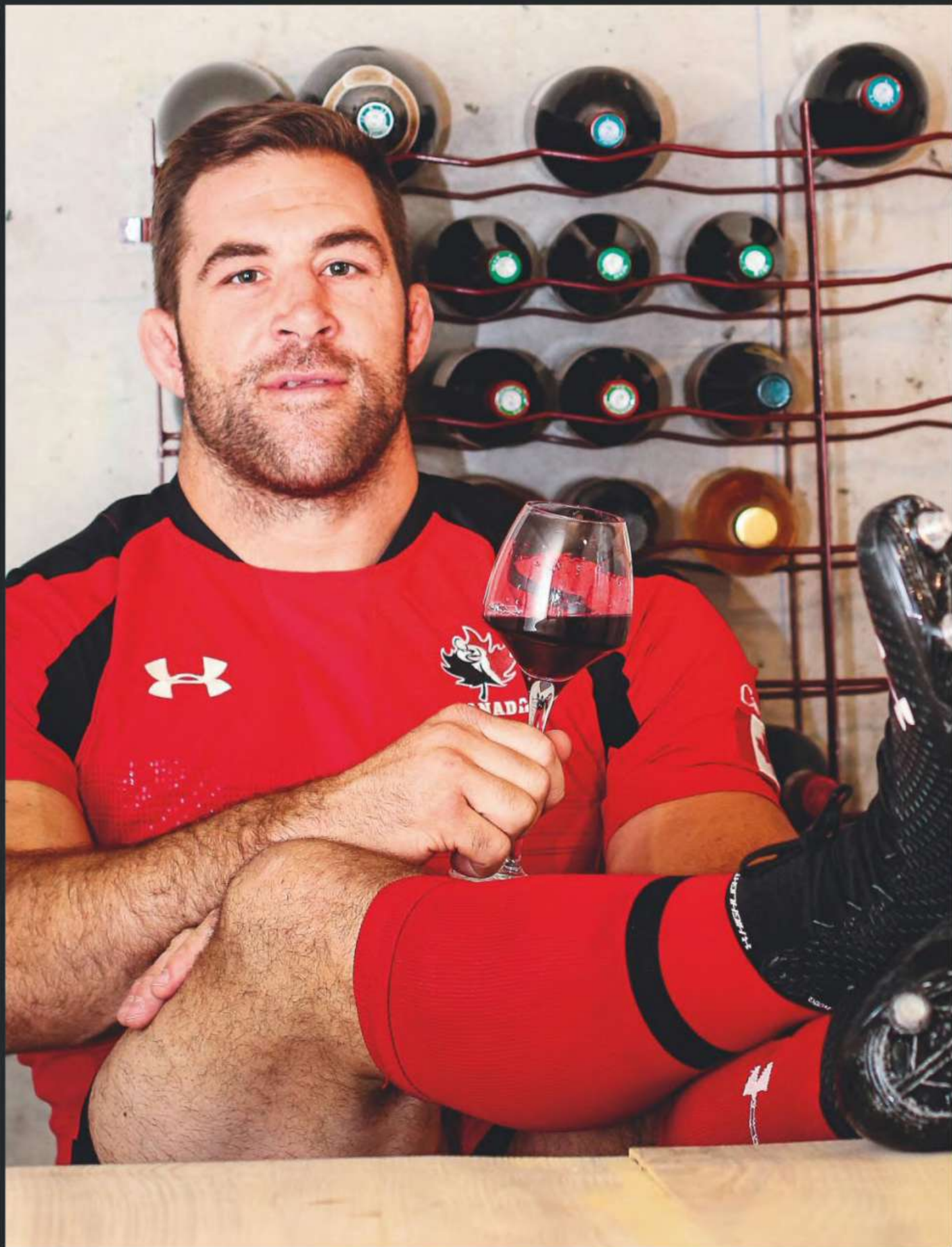


OSCAR DURAN

First capped in 2001, he then fell out of favour with selectors and was not a regular at tighthead until Pablo Lemoine took over as coach. A strong scrummager, he is one of the team's quiet leaders.



PICS: GETTY IMAGES & REUTERS/ACION IMAGES



WORDS: GAVIN MORTIMER // MAIN PICTURE: AMANDINE RIGAUD/RUGBYPR LTD

VINTAGE RED

Having left his bad-boy days behind him, veteran lock **Jamie Cudmore** is now enjoying success on the field with Clermont and Canada as well as off it with his new wine venture

THE FACTS

JAMIE CUDMORE

Age 37 (6 Sep 1978)
Born Winnipeg
Position Lock
Club Clermont
Canada caps 33 (2T)
Twitter @JNCudmore

JAMIE CUDMORE has been round the block a few times – in his life and on his bike. Nowadays he rides for pleasure but in his youth it was a rite of passage.

Growing up in the small Canadian town of Squamish, Cudmore fell in with a gang and did things he shouldn't have done. He admits them all – the expulsion from school, the run-ins with the law – and excuses none of them. But they're all in the past, a long time in the past. A different millennium, in fact.

The Jamie Cudmore of 2015 is a different beast to the one of the 1990s. Today he has his own wine label, a young family and a reputation as one of the grandees of professional rugby. Not bad for a lad who once served time in a juvenile detention centre.

The Cudmore story begins thousands of miles from Squamish in the altogether more genteel surroundings of Littlehampton. His dad, Richard, hails from the quaint Sussex seaside town and in his day represented the county at rugby. He wasn't a bad back-rower by all accounts, but rugby was very much a distraction →



PICS: GETTY IMAGES & INFO

→ from his medical studies. After graduating from Cambridge University, Dr Cudmore and his wife emigrated to Canada and not long after arriving in Manitoba the first of three sons was born.

"I knew about rugby from a young age," explains Cudmore. "My dad had a lot of Five Nations matches on tapes and would put them on for me and say, 'Wouldn't it be great if you could play?'" By then the Cudmores had relocated to Squamish, a rural town 50 miles north of Vancouver in British Columbia. "There was no rugby in Squamish," says Cudmore. "Just hockey and skiing with some baseball and soccer in summer."

Cudmore didn't pick up his first rugby ball until his mid-teens. "I was sent to a school that played rugby but I got into a lot of trouble with the other kids, fights that kicked off, and eventually got asked to leave," he says. Back in Squamish, Cudmore fell in with the wrong crowd and fell foul of the police. "My dad was definitely very worried about me," he reflects. "He did everything he could to get me away from certain people but at that age I was pretty headstrong and I thought I was a man. Obviously I wasn't."

He was mature enough to realise he should leave Squamish. So he made for Vancouver, joined a rugby club, but found it too pretentious. Members were mainly office workers who didn't appreciate his arriving for training in overalls covered in sawdust and oil after a day bush logging. He tried another club, Capilano, and never looked back. "There were a lot of guys in construction or landscaping, like me, and there was a lot of laughter," he says. "They took the p*** out of me for coming from Squamish and from my first training session I just thought, 'This is more like it'."

Within a year, Cudmore was on his way to New Zealand to spend the 1999 season playing for the East Coast Bays, a decent club on Auckland's North Shore. Capilano had a reciprocal bursary programme with the club, allowing players to spend a season experiencing another culture. "I learnt so much over there," says the lock, who combined rugby with a job in construction. "New Zealand was leaps and bounds ahead in terms of fitness and skills to what I'd known in Canada."

Cudmore was a fast learner, however, and once back in Canada he enrolled into a programme for the country's brightest young rugby talent. Two years later, in the

◀ **Pacific rivals** Cudmore carries into Japan at the 2011 World Cup

summer of 2002, he made his first Test appearance in a 36-13 victory against the USA, acquitting himself so well that Llanelli Scarlets snapped him up for a season.

The 6ft 5in Cudmore is now the grizzled veteran of the Canada squad, a player who will appear in his fourth World Cup at 37. Four years ago he was part of a side that beat Tonga and drew with Japan, losing their other two pool matches to France and New Zealand. The All Blacks game gave Cudmore a chance to meet up again with Brad Thorn, a player he'd first encountered in the 2003 tournament. "After that game I'd gone into the changing room and asked Brad if we'd swap jerseys," says Cudmore. "He said he couldn't because he'd promised it to a charity, but after the 2011 game he came up to me, apologised about not being able to change jerseys eight years earlier and we swapped this time."

Canada avoid New Zealand in 2015 but they are paired with France again. Cudmore's delighted and says with a chuckle he might try "a couple of cheeky rib shots" on his Clermont team-mates. Then there's Ireland, the only home nation that Cudmore has never played against. Not that he's unfamiliar with the Irish. He has encountered most at one time or another in the European Cup, none more so than Paul O'Connell. The pair famously clashed in a 2008 Heineken Cup tie, with fiery fisticuffs that earned Cudmore a red card and the

Munster lock a yellow. Is he looking forward to squaring up to O'Connell in the World Cup? "If he makes it," Cudmore replies, a mere flicker of a grin crossing his lips. "He's getting pretty old now, isn't he...?"

The big Canadian is quick to add that he holds O'Connell in the highest regard. "He's a quality player and a pure rugby man," he says. "What

happens on the field is full-on and afterwards we'll have a chat and a laugh, something I really appreciate."

The pair had one such natter after last season's Champions Cup tie between Clermont and Munster. Cudmore even gave him a bottle of his 'Sin Bin' wine. "Obviously I took a Red Card bottle for myself and gave him the Yellow Card bottle," he says.

The wine was launched earlier in the year by Cudmore and his wife. It was Jennifer who came up with the idea of capitalising on his reputation as one of rugby's bad boys (he has earned nearly as many cards as he has Test caps) and her husband was happy to go along with it.

Playing the part of the pantomime villain doesn't bother Cudmore because he's smart enough and big enough to know how the world works. His discipline has long since stopped being a liability for coaches and team-mates, and in the last two seasons for Clermont he's received just three yellow cards in 40 matches. As for his most recent red card, that was back in 2009-10.

His wild period was with Grenoble in 2004-05 when he collected eight yellows in 21 matches. The club were in turmoil with then coach Dean Richards trying to keep the peace in a dressing room divided by language.



If the cap fits
At Australia 2003



▲ **All back**
In action v New Zealand in 2011





"I WAS PRETTY **HEADSTRONG** AND THOUGHT I WAS A MAN"

▼ **Club stalwart**
Cudmore has played more than 200 games for Clermont




Cudmore has the greatest of respect for 'Deano', as he does another old Tiger, Richard Cockerill. The former England hooker was winding down his career in 2004 at Clermont (then Montferrand) when he suggested Cudmore had a stint at Welford Road. "We had an open and honest discussion and it came down to a choice between joining Leicester or going to Clermont," says Cudmore. "I felt that I hadn't really given France a chance as I'd only been there for a couple of years. Things were tough at Grenoble and I didn't want to leave France having gone down (to Pro D2) with a club."

So in 2005 Cudmore signed for Clermont and there he's remained, recently extending his contract until the end of the 2015-16 season. He'll be pushing 38 by then, and in all probability will call it a day. So then what?

The pull of one's native land is strong, particularly when Cudmore has an urge to give back some of what he's taken from rugby. "I want to move into coaching eventually," he says. "I coach the cadets (juniors) at Clermont and enjoy it, and I think it's important to use what I've learnt in my career to help bring through the next generations of Canadian players."

"Rugby has definitely progressed in the last 15 years. I see kids playing in school. I never had that opportunity. If we'd had kids coming through in 1991 like we do now we'd be a lot closer to the top countries. But we're seeing improvements and the Canada U20 team recently reached the World Trophy final. We've got the athletes, we've just got to get them playing rugby younger, but the rise of sevens is going to play a part in that."

When Cudmore does finally retire, rugby will lose one of its real characters. The way he has played the game over the years might not be to everyone's taste but there's no denying he's added some colour to the game – and we're not just talking red and yellow. 

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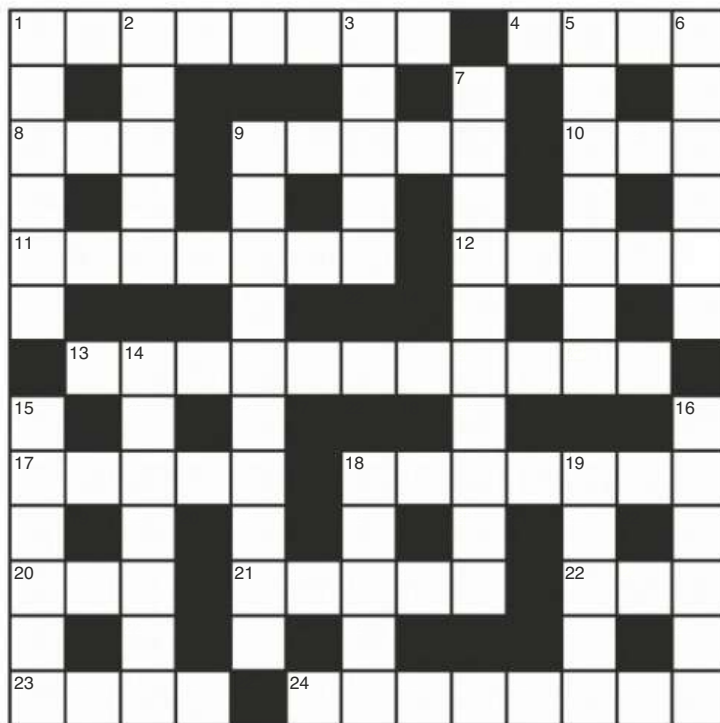
ACROSS

- 1 He came off the bench to win the Rugby Championship for Australia in Sydney (3,5)
- 4 --- Ben Arous, Racing Métro prop who started three of France's 2015 Six Nations games (4)
- 8 Matt Lovell, England Rugby sports nutritionist, advocates drinking lots of the green variety (3)
- 9 Old Irish club – sounds like they're making a sneaky attempt! (5)
- 10 Parker ---, former sponsors of Europe's second-tier competition (3)
- 11 And 19 Down. Humorist who wrote the timeless classic *The Art of Coarse Rugby* (7,5)
- 12 Maro ---, rising star of the English game at Saracens (5)
- 13 The two colours most associated with Canterbury Crusaders (5,3,3)
- 17 Cornish school whose U15 side reached the 2011 Daily Mail-RBS Cup final at Twickenham (5)
- 18 The reigning Pro12 champions (7)
- 20 The average --- of New Zealand's RWC 2011-winning team was 28 (3)
- 21 Craig ---, All Black centre who scored two tries at RWC 1991 (5)
- 22 Manu Tuilagi needed 19 stitches in his left one after tackling Louis Picamoles in 2013 (3)

- 23 --- Mclean, England Women's World Cup-winning captain (4)
- 24 See 14 Down

DOWN

- 1 "Owen Farrell has --- for self-pity," wrote *The Daily Telegraph's* Gavin Mairs in January (2,4)
- 2 Initially Chris Robshaw and I cackle – what great fun with the Irish! (5)
- 3 Jon ---, Canada prop who overcame a defective heart to play in three World Cups (5)
- 5 Ex-England No 8 who manages the defence coaching at Harlequins (7)
- 6 Pulled the ball out of a maul – like an American? (6)
- 7 Scotland's first World Cup captain, and a legend of Hawick (5,5)
- 9 One of three Leinster front-rowers to score a try in the 2012 Heineken Cup final, against Ulster (4,6)
- 14 And 24 Across. France flanker of the Nineties mischievously sent banana – cruel! (7,8)
- 15 Some coaches say it's the best form of defence (6)
- 16 USA captain and lock at the 1991 World Cup is well armed... (6)
- 18 ...while this No 9 captained the Aussies v USA at the 2011 event (5)
- 19 See 11 Across



THE WINNER OF THE AUGUST CROSSWORD IS RICHARD STEVENSON FROM ATHERSTONE, WARWICKSHIRE

ACROSS 1. Size five 7. Sean 8. Yachvili 9. Cronin 10. Onside 11. Gar 12. Price 14. Scott 16. Cut 18. Recall 20. Isaacs 22. Matawalu 23. Exit 24. Dynamite.
DOWN 1. Shearer 2. Zanon 3. Flying 4. Victor 5. Solid 6. Kvesic 13. Chabal 15. Tactile 16. Cleary 17. Tipuna 19. Evans 21. Aleki.



The crossword winner will receive a case of the legendary **Hobgoblin ruby beer**, from the Wychwood brewery (www.wychwood.co.uk). Like them on Facebook – Hobgoblin beer. The closing date for entries is Friday 9 October. Results will appear in our December 2015 issue. Send your entries and address to: Rugby World Crossword, Seventh Floor, Blue Fin Building, 110 Southwark Street, London, SE1 0SU. Full competition rules are on P14. Entrants must be over 18. **Compiled by Alan Pearey.**

The Pre-Converted Try

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SCRUM



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THIS MONTH THE RUGBY WORLD SCRUM FOCUSES ON THE GAIN LINE...



'The Gain Line', a new film by award winning artist Ravi Deepres, promises to take audiences on a unique journey to the heart of the game of rugby. Using innovative new technologies such as micro-cams, drones mapping player movement and groundbreaking 3D laser scanning, the film places the viewer into the mindset of the player. Although rugby is a visceral, physical sport it is also one that increasingly monitors a range of sophisticated technological data (including GPS, heart rate and other readings). Combining insights gained from this new digital field, while transporting us back to the historical origins of the game, Deepres' work captures the intensity and dynamics of rugby while also evoking some of the physical and psychological forces it sets in motion.

A film by artist
Ravi Deepres

The Gain Line

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HOW TO MAKE GOOD DECISIONS AT 15

England and Harlequins star Mike Brown explains how to make the right choices from full-back

Finishing touch

Mike Brown works on his technique with England



Mike Brown made 325 metres in four games during this year's Six Nations, which was just behind England's top performer Jack Nowell (326).



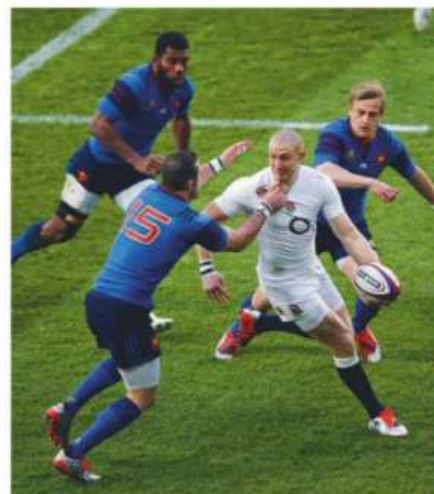
1 ASSESS YOUR OPTIONS

"Being left-footed, I like to put myself on the left-hand side to receive a kick so I can clear my lines. Once I get the ball, I'll do a quick assessment of the area of the field I'm in. If the opponents have a good kick-chase and I'm in my 22, it's a case of hoofing it clear."



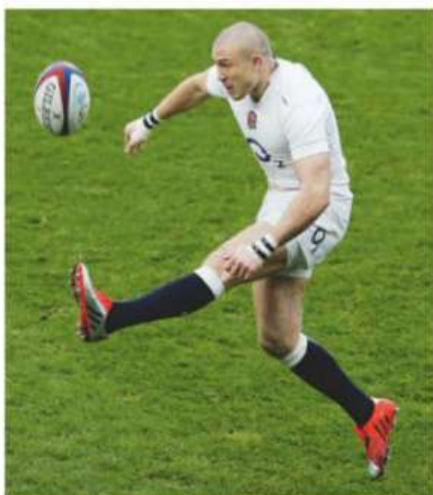
2 COMMUNICATION IS KEY

"When the ball is in the air, players near the catcher are encouraged to shout 'time' or 'get-up' if there's a good kick-chase and they have little time to act. If you have time, I like to tell the catcher if there's space in the backfield or whether to run it out or pass."



3 TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS

"When you get the ball, your senses are on high alert. If someone is calling for the ball, it's because they have seen something so I'll go with it. You almost need peripheral vision to know what option to take. There's always an element of risk but you have to be brave."



4 PICK YOUR KICK

"When I collect the ball, I'll decide whether I can kick and regain or kick long depending on their backfield – whether it's deep or high. It's not risky to kick and regain if you do it at the right time and if both players are competing legitimately in the air."



5 WORK ON POSITIONING

"With the trend for more kicking, as a full-back you're increasingly working as the side's sweeper, gathering the ball, so you need to get in the right position. To help us we watch the body language of kickers and chasers. Individuals have certain traits."



6 DO YOUR HOMEWORK

"Analysis is essential at the top level as the time to make decisions is so much shorter. The week before a game you'll go over how their backfield operates. We'll have in-depth packages of what the opposition is likely to do but you can't stick too rigidly to it."

WHAT YOU COULD DO



MIKE BROWN
ENGLAND

● Practise, practise, practise! Whether it's working on your speed for counter-attacking, kicking to

regain, or working on the accuracy of your long punts, it's time well spent.

● If you can access some tackle bags, practise taking high balls. Find someone to put pressure on you to replicate in-game situations.

- Watch the experts. The aerial game is a key part of rugby and sides like Ireland and Wales have profited from turning defence into attack from the back. Even the All Blacks are kicking more.
- Work on your tackling. As a full-back you're expected to be brave. Making last-ditch tackles is part of the job.



INTERVIEW: OWAIN JONES. PICS: GETTY IMAGES

A close-up photograph of a person's face, partially covered in red paint. The paint is applied in thick, textured strokes, covering the right side of the face, the forehead, and the cheek. The person's left eye is visible, looking directly at the camera. The background is dark and out of focus.

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HOW TO EAT ON REST DAYS

WHEN YOU are deep in competition, playing a steady stream of tough games, your rest days are just as important as your days of physical exertion. That is particularly true of your diet.

If you train every day and then put yourself through a car-crash of a game on Saturday, Sunday becomes 'Operation Eat Yourself Better'. The temptation for many knackered amateur athletes

would be to binge and chow through all the bad stuff that is a no-no during training days. For others, like those mindful of their figure, it would be tempting to eat much less.

Don't do either, folks. On these days you still have to replenish your muscle and liver glycogen stores with the proper grub. You need to eat as you would on any tough training day, not only to maintain balance as muscle protein synthesis continues days after your biggest exertions, but also to keep your



DO

► Get those greens – even on rest days. Kale and green beans get a mention but try spinach or broccoli

DON'T

► Cut back on your calorie intake just because you're sitting around

immune system fighting-fit when it is at its most vulnerable.

Drink at least three litres of water on rest days – on heavy days we recommend five. Citrus fruits can help you snaffle up some vitamin C and E, which can aid you when you're swollen and sore. You should also try to eat high-fibre and nutrient-dense legumes and grains. Chickpeas offer the fibre, kale has the nutrients.

Iron has to be a consideration for recovery too. Lentils are another accompaniment you could consider alongside the dark meats you may want to eat – like this steak below!

EAT AS YOU WOULD ON ANY TRAINING DAY

Beans are also a good source of iron



STEAK AND MASH WITH A TWIST!

- 4 large parsnips, cut into chunks
- 2½ tablespoons of healthy cooking oil
- 4 frying steaks
- 200g of green beans
- 75ml red wine
- ½ teaspoon of grated nutmeg

- 1** Simmer the parsnips in boiling, salted water for 15 minutes or until tender. Drain, reserving a cupful of the cooking water.
- 2** Meanwhile, heat a large non-stick frying pan and heat the oil. Season the steaks and add to the pan. Sear for two minutes on one side, turn over and cook for one minute or until cooked to your liking. Rest.
- 3** Steam beans over simmering water for five minutes.
- 4** Add the wine to the steak pan and bubble quickly for one minute to make a light gravy. Stir in 50ml of water, season and remove from the heat.
- 5** Mash the parsnip and add the nutmeg with a little of the cooking water.
- 6** Serve the steak with the mash and beans on the side, and with the red wine gravy poured over the top.

▲ Recipe from...
Essentials
Magazine

HOW TO BOX-KICK LIKE ALL BLACK AARON SMITH

THE EXERCISES 3 STEPS TO SUCCESS

Follow these simple moves and you could be box-kicking like a pro...

DYNAMIC HAMMY KICK

▼ 2 X 10 REPS PER LEG

Using a wall or stick to stand upright and balanced, swing a leg out straight and controlled. Repeat.



HURDLE STEPS

▼ 2 X 10 REPS PER LEG

Standing, raise one knee without leaning. Straighten leg and step forward. Repeat on opposite leg.



PLANK POSITION LEG LIFTS

▼ 3 X 10 REPS PER LEG

Begin a standard plank, on elbows and toes with a neutral spine. Lift one foot off the ground and avoid any rotation or trunk lift. Repeat.



A BOX-KICK can go one of three ways. First, it could go firing into an opponent who charges it down. Second, it could fly straight into touch. Third, it could fly over everyone and into the wide expanse beyond the ruck.

Whether that third option leads to the ball falling straight down the throat of the opposition's best

attacker or finds grass is a matter of talent, a sharp eye and hours of skill-based practice. However, we feel we can help ensure the mechanical side of kicking is never hindered by a lack of flexibility or movement.

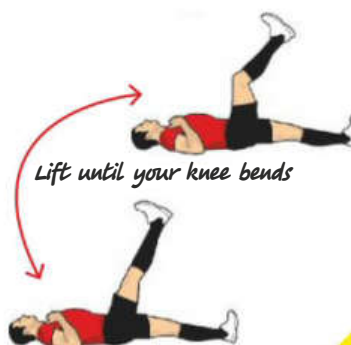
So to the left, Mat Grove, from Performance Pro Gym in London, outlines exercises to help you power through the perfect box-kick and below is a personal fitness challenge.

▲ Box office
Smith in kicking
action for NZ

THE RUGBY WORLD FITNESS CHALLENGE

Hamstring flexibility test This is one to do on your own – challenging yourself to become more flexible in the hamstrings. Lie on your back with legs straight, toes pointing up. With no other movement, lift one leg at a time towards your chest, keeping it straight until the knee starts to bend.

Test repeatedly 'Measuring' for this will be in your head, but see if our exercises help you lift your leg back further before the knee bends.



ARE YOU GETTING MORE FLEXIBLE?

Tell us! Contact us on Twitter @Rugbyworldmag or via Facebook – Rugby World Magazine

WATCH MORE



▲ To watch a video of the exercises on the left being performed, go to [po.st/Box](https://www.rugbyworld.com/po.st/Box). And for more advice on drills, fitness and coaching, see [rugbyworld.com/takingpart](https://www.rugbyworld.com/takingpart)

CUT OUT. TAKE TO TRAINING. TAKE TO THE PARK. KEEP.

Tim Payne's SCORE LIKE ENGLAND

Former England and Lions prop Tim Payne explains a try-scoring move used during his 22-Test career...

What's the objective? For 11 to score off a five-man lineout from about 30 metres out.

How it works From quick ball off the top of the lineout, 8 attacks the 10 channel with 7 on his shoulder. Just before contact, 8 passes out the back to his own 10, who passes against the grain to 11 on the inside.

Key points 8 has to take it to the line, 7 has to run a good tip (support) line, 12 runs a hard decoy line and 10 needs quick hands for an immediate offload to 11.



Tim Payne, the London Scottish forwards coach, won two Heineken Cups and three Premiership titles with Wasps



A

STEP A

5 and 3 lift 6, then 9 hits 8, who attacks the line, with 7 and 12



B

STEP B

8 hits 10 out the back, who immediately passes to 11 on the inside

RUGBY WORLD

PRO MOVES. ONLY IN RUGBY WORLD MAGAZINE

CUT OUT. TAKE TO TRAINING. TAKE TO THE PARK. KEEP.



Ellis says...

"LEARN TO PLAY CHANNEL TAG"

What's needed

Two to eight balls, tags/belts and cones to mark out four parallel channels, about 3m wide and 10m long.

How to play

Nominate four defenders, one for each channel, and divide attackers into two

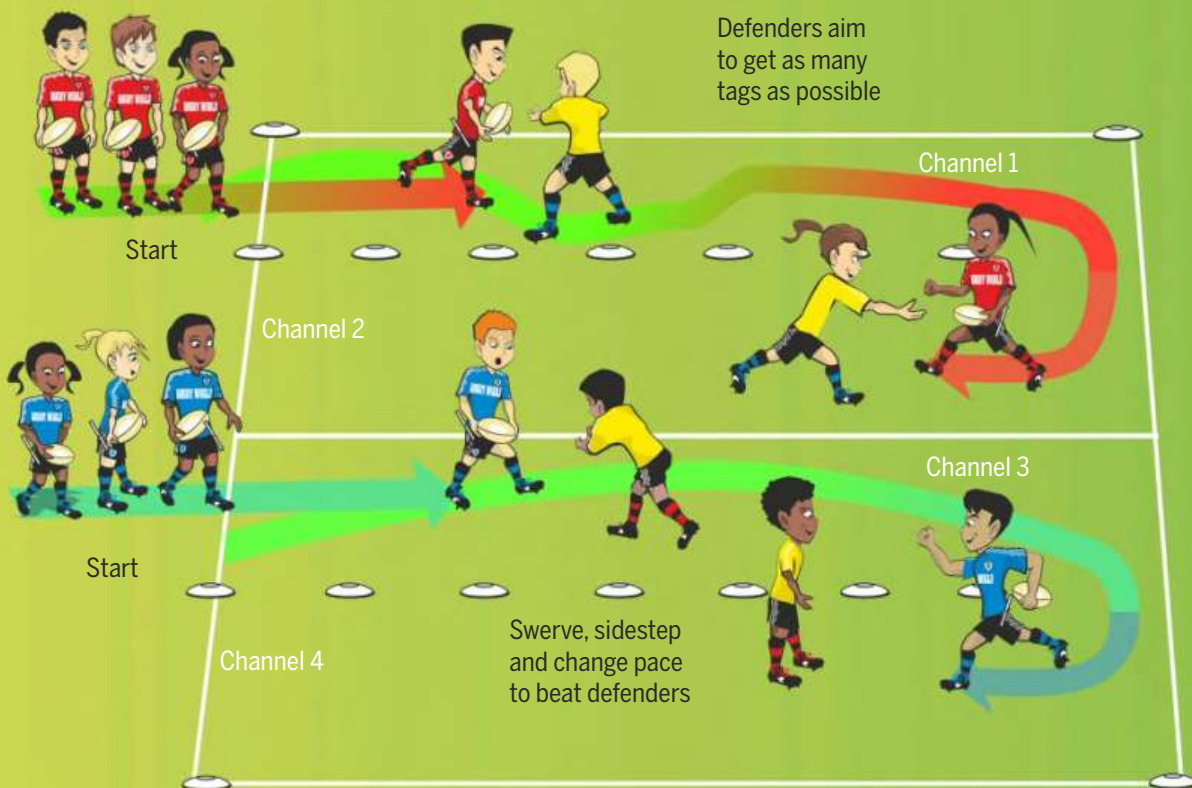
groups. The first and third defenders face the attackers while the second and fourth face the opposite direction.

The first team of attackers line up at the first channel and the others attack the third channel. One at a time, attackers must run along the first channel attempting to

get past the defender before turning to attack the second channel's defender. The aim is to keep both tags intact.

Tactics

After everyone's had several goes at attacking/defending, see if anyone can make it past all four defenders.



RUGBY WORLD

MINI RUGBY GAMES. ONLY IN RUGBY WORLD MAGAZINE

THIS MONTH'S SKILL

HOW TO SIDESTEP

A SIDESTEP is a great way to beat a defender in a one-on-one situation. The trick is to pretend you are going to run past on one side, but change direction at the last second. Start by running straight at the defender, then step wide to one side

of him, placing your body weight onto your outside leg, ready to explode off that foot as the defender steps across to cover you.

As he does, shift your weight to the other side of your body. Then push off on your outside leg and accelerate.

Next month Play Overload Touch



WATCH MORE

To watch a video of mini players demonstrating this drill, go to po.st/Sidestep. For more skills videos, see rugbyworld.com/takingpart





Happier times
Neil Back enjoys the 2003 World Cup win

WORDS: NATIE FIELD. PIC: GETTY IMAGES

BOOK OF THE MONTH

The Death of Rugby

NEIL BACK lifts the lid on the mismanagement of Rugby Lions during the 2011-12 season in a book which just pips Michael Lynagh's *Blindsided* to 'Book of the Month'.

Head coach Back, CEO Andy Key and other coaches received no salaries all year as Michael Aland, the owner of The Rugby Football Club (2011) Ltd, broke a succession of promises concerning funding.

The coaches sometimes paid the players out of their own pockets and Back questions why the RFU punished Rugby Lions for their financial issues by demoting them, but took no action against Aland, who no longer owns



the club. "When I left Rugby Lions, it was the Death of Rugby as my relationship with the game will never be the same again," he writes.

The Rugby story is just one chapter in an interesting autobiography covering 2001 onwards. His memories of RWC 2003, his look back at the 2005 Lions tour and his reflections on his years at Leicester, Leeds and Edinburgh are all worth reading.

His wife Ali chips in with her own viewpoint, including revelations about death threats and family rows.

6 TO GIVE AWAY

For a chance to win a copy of this book, go to rugbyworld.com/competitions and enter the relevant competition.

RW Rating ★★★★★
Pitch Publishing, £18.99

Blindsided



Australian legend Michael Lynagh tells the story of the stroke he suffered in April 2012 and his subsequent battle to survive, in great detail and with fascinating honesty. There are also revelations from his playing career, including the "ordeal" of being a goalkicker.

RW Rating ★★★★★
Harper Collins, £20

The Telegraph Book of the Rugby World Cup



Memorable articles published by the *Daily* and *Sunday Telegraph* during all seven World Cups to date are reprinted in this book, alongside quirky readers' letters and some comments from players. It brings the tournaments alive again.

RW Rating ★★★★★
Aurum Press, £18.99

The Official RWC Fact File



This colourful annual-style book is a great World Cup guide for younger fans. It features profiles of each of the teams, information about the origin of the tournament, details of the 2015 venues and 24 players to watch, plus a couple of quizzes.

RW Rating ★★★★★
Carlton Books, £7.99

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A



B



C



D



1



2



3



1. adidas Blackout boot XT

The All Blacks are going retro with these boots. They're £159.99 at rugbystore.co.uk

2. Raging Bull gingham shirt

This will be worn by the Tonga squad during the World Cup. £24.99 from ragingbull.co.uk

3. Front Up T-shirt

Natty attention to detail and a cool logo – what's not to like? It's £25 at frontup.co.uk

4



5



6



4. The North Face Masen 31L duffle bag

A perfect overnigher, this has plenty of pockets. £74.99 from ellis-brigham.com

5. Thomas Pink socks

After a debonair look? Start with some stripy socks for £16 from thomaspink.com

6. Stade jersey

The French champions never worry about standing out. Their new shirt is £59.99 at lovell-rugby.co.uk

MARIUS TINCU

Age 37 (7 April 1978) Born Vanatori Country Romania Position Forwards coach

HE MADE his name as a hooker for Perpignan and Romania, playing in all eight of the Oaks' games at the 2007 and 2011 World Cups, but these days Marius Tincu is a coach. He's in charge of the Montpellier women's team and is coaching Romania's forwards at this World Cup. Here he charts his journey from the family farm to the rugby field...

I was 14 when I first played rugby. I tried to play soccer – everyone loves soccer – but the coaches at my school suggested I try rugby. I'm big and I got the ball a lot so I enjoyed that. I also did a bit of boxing because I had a friend who did that, but the motivation isn't the same with individual sport.

I started out at No 8. I played for Romania U20 and the A team at No 8, and also played a bit at six. Then when I started to play professional rugby in France I moved to hooker.

My university in Romania had an exchange programme with a French university. So I went to France for a year and played rugby twice a week – for the university on a Thursday afternoon and then for a Fédérale Three club on Sundays.

The first six months I spent in France were hard. When you live with people who speak in French all the time, you must speak it. I'd learnt English at school but didn't speak French when I went there. For me, it wasn't as hard as learning English because the two languages (French and Romanian) are very close.

During my university holidays I worked on the farm with my parents. They paid for my study so I helped them – it was good exercise for me! In small villages in Romania everybody has animals and a field, but it's all for living, not for profit.

My father didn't want me to play rugby. He wanted me to stay on the

farm and work with him. Then I got offered the chance to play rugby professionally in France and had money to help him. He was happy for me because my life had changed.

My parents only watched me play twice. They live in the north of the country and Romania play in Bucharest, so it's a long way to travel.

I didn't expect the chance to be a professional. Playing for the Romania A team gave me more motivation to continue and after I'd played for Romania in 2002, I got a development contract with Pau. Then in 2005 I joined Perpignan and played there for seven years.

Perpignan is a great place to live. The Mediterranean Sea is not far away, the weather is good and sport is very important to the people in Perpignan. They live for rugby and that's good for the team. There's good support and a good atmosphere.

I enjoy coaching. At the 2011 World Cup I worked with the forwards and played at the same time. I stopped playing in 2012 and now I'm just coaching. The time I spend with the Romania national team means it's not possible for me to work with a professional club at the moment. I don't know what will happen in the future. It depends whether somebody will give me the opportunity.

Women's rugby has become more popular. Since the Women's World Cup last year, a lot of professional men's clubs in France have tried to have a women's team, which is good for the game. I can coach Montpellier as they train and play at a different time to the national team. They're



TINCU'S TOP 3s

Hookers
William Servat
Keven Mealamu
Yannick Bru
Films
The Patriot
Gladiator
Braveheart
Holidays
New Zealand
Ireland
Spain

◀ **Driving range**
Scoring against the All Blacks in 2007



INTERVIEW: SARAH MCKENFORD. PICS: GETTY IMAGES & REUTERS/ACTION IMAGES



Motivational speaker
Rallying his team-mates
during the 2011 World Cup

“EVERYTHING HAS BEEN PUT IN PLACE FOR THE PLAYERS AND I HOPE THEY UNDERSTAND THEY’RE VERY LUCKY”

not professional and sometimes it’s not possible for them to come because of work or study, but when they do train they give 100%.

The preparation for this World Cup is like nothing I experienced as a player. Everything has been put in place for the players and I hope they understand they’re very lucky to be here and to go to a World Cup. I think we’ll have a good tournament.

It’s very important for us to keep playing in

► **No glove** Tincu prefers rugby to boxing



the World Cup. At this moment in time it’s hard for Romania because all the money comes from the state. Some clubs try to be professional but there’s no money from sponsors, so it’s hard to keep players and coaches in the country.

Away from rugby, I like to fish. I met my wife at university in France so when I’m not involved with the Romania team I’m in France. I live near the sea in Perpignan and enjoy fishing. I also like movies,

DID YOU KNOW?

Marius Tincu won 53 caps for Romania but the Oaks’ most-capped player is Cristian Petre, with 92 between 2001 and 2012.

so I go to the cinema, and I enjoy walking in the mountains nearby.

I have three daughters. The oldest one is 11 and doesn’t like sports – she spends her time reading books. The second one wants to play; she comes to training and games with me and knows the rules, but she’s only nine. Up until 16 girls play with boys and she doesn’t want to play with boys, so she’ll have to wait until she’s 16. The youngest one is four and a half so we’ll have to wait and see.

My favourite rugby memory... The game against Russia in 2010 for qualification for the 2011 World Cup. It was in Bucharest and there were 30,000 people in the stands. We won the game, played good rugby, and afterwards I was told that my baby had been born. I loved everything about that day – it was fantastic. **NEW**

WHAT GOES ON TOUR

Goes in Rugby World

THE CRUSHING nature of Wales' (49-6) semi-final defeat by New Zealand at the 1987 World Cup left us demoralised, writes former Wales centre Mark Ring. We were outmanoeuvred in every phase.

After the match, the IRB representative who had been following us around the tournament, an English bloke called John Kendall-Carpenter (chairman of the RWC committee), made an address.

Sensing our lads needed some cheering up, I decided to set myself a challenge. I turned to Richard Moriarty and bet him NZ\$25 that while Kendall-Carpenter was making his speech I could pinch the handkerchief, which was always there come hell or high water, from his blazer pocket.

I went to the salad bar, picked up a pair of tongs and sneaked behind our man,

I SET MYSELF A CHALLENGE AND MORIARTY GAVE ME 6-1 ODDS

with the rest of the boys looking on in amazement. I was determined to pull it off, as Moriarty had given me 6-1 odds.

As Kendall-Carpenter turned one way and then the other, my silver salad tongs were ducking and diving as I tried desperately to swipe the handkerchief.

Eventually, I got hold of it and went to yank it out – only to discover it was sewn in. I ended up almost pulling the poor bloke's blazer off. Everyone collapsed in hysterics and the stunt was taken in good spirits by one and all.

● Extract from *Ring Master*, published by Mainstream in 2006, RRP £15.99. 



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STAR-STUDDED LINE-UP

With the 2015 Rugby World Cup now upon us, it seemed fitting to cast our minds back over the previous seven tournaments and pay tribute to those players who have made an impact on the sport's biggest stage. That's exactly what we've done in this *50 World Cup Stars* magazine.

Picking the 50 greatest World Cup players is a sizeable task, so *Rugby World* called on the expertise of our correspondents around the world. Each one nominated their top ten picks and from there we compiled a list of 50 spanning 24 years, from the inaugural tournament in 1987 to last time out in 2011.

From players who have shown continued excellence across multiple World Cups to those who have provided moments of individual genius in a specific tournament, there is a veritable galaxy of stars on our list. We'd love to know what you think, too, so send us your thoughts on the biggest World Cup stars to rugbyworldletters@timeinc.com or get in touch via social media.



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Please mark your envelope 'World Cup Stars' and make cheques payable to 'Rugby World'.



Talk of iconic moments at the 2007 World Cup and the scorching finish by Takudzwa Ngwenya against South Africa would be right up there.

The Springboks were coasting at 24-3, when the USA intercepted a loose pass and broke away, with Mike Hercus then looping a 15m pass out to Ngwenya. Bryan Habana invited Ngwenya to try to take him on the outside. Bad idea.

With a shimmy and step, Ngwenya, who had been timed at 10.5 seconds for the 100m, scorched down the touchline to leave Habana for dead.

Against Samoa, the winger proved it was no fluke with another scintillating score.

He also played in the 2011 World Cup but didn't manage to have the same impact.



Eat my dust!
Ngwenya leaves Habana in his wake



Life begins at 40, or so the saying goes, and that much is true of Diego Ormaechea in terms of the World Cup at least. Most players entering their fifth decade are happy to put their feet up and watch the action unfold on television; not so the Uruguay No 8.

He signed off his 20-year Test career by leading *los Teros* into their first World Cup in 1999 and still holds a couple of RWC records. He's the oldest try-scorer, crossing against Spain aged 40 years and 13 days, and the oldest player, facing South Africa 13 days later.

In 2003 he was back as coach of Uruguay, saying: "We have to make our impact somehow." They did that by beating Georgia 24-12.

Ormaechea has no direct involvement with this year's tournament but he is sure to be glued to the tournament given that his son, Agustín, will be playing for Uruguay.

"I can't get enough of hearing good stuff about World Cups, so I'm happy I will be able to live the same things he did," says the scrum-half. World Cups are sure to be a dinner-table topic Chez Ormaechea for some time to come.



Jannie de Beer. It's a name that still sends shivers down the backs of England fans.

England were up against South Africa in the Stade de France in the 1999 quarters and the Boks were marshalled by a fly-half from Welkom with an uncanny resemblance to Richie Cunningham of *Happy Days* fame.

Nick Mallett's side were narrowly in the lead at half-time (16-12) but, behind a solid pack, they then utilised

de Beer's unerring accuracy with the boot to leave England's World Cup dream in tatters. De Beer, who was playing for London Scottish at the time, dropped a record five goals from all angles in a 34-point masterclass to bury England.

It was a stunning display but after the tournament de Beer would never pull on the Springboks shirt again. He turned out for Saracens in later years before a knee injury forced him to retire.



CHRISTOPHE LAMAISSON
FRANCE

The France fly-half will always be remembered for his masterful performance against the All Blacks in the 1999 World Cup semi-final at Twickenham.

It was Christophe Lemaillon's only World Cup, and at first it didn't look like it would add up to

much. He was a substitute in the opening game against Canada, and made small interventions as a starter in wins over Namibia and Fiji. The French shuffled into the knockout rounds and beat Argentina in the quarters.

It was in the semi-final against New Zealand, though, that Lemaillon came to the fore, with France etching their names into rugby folklore.

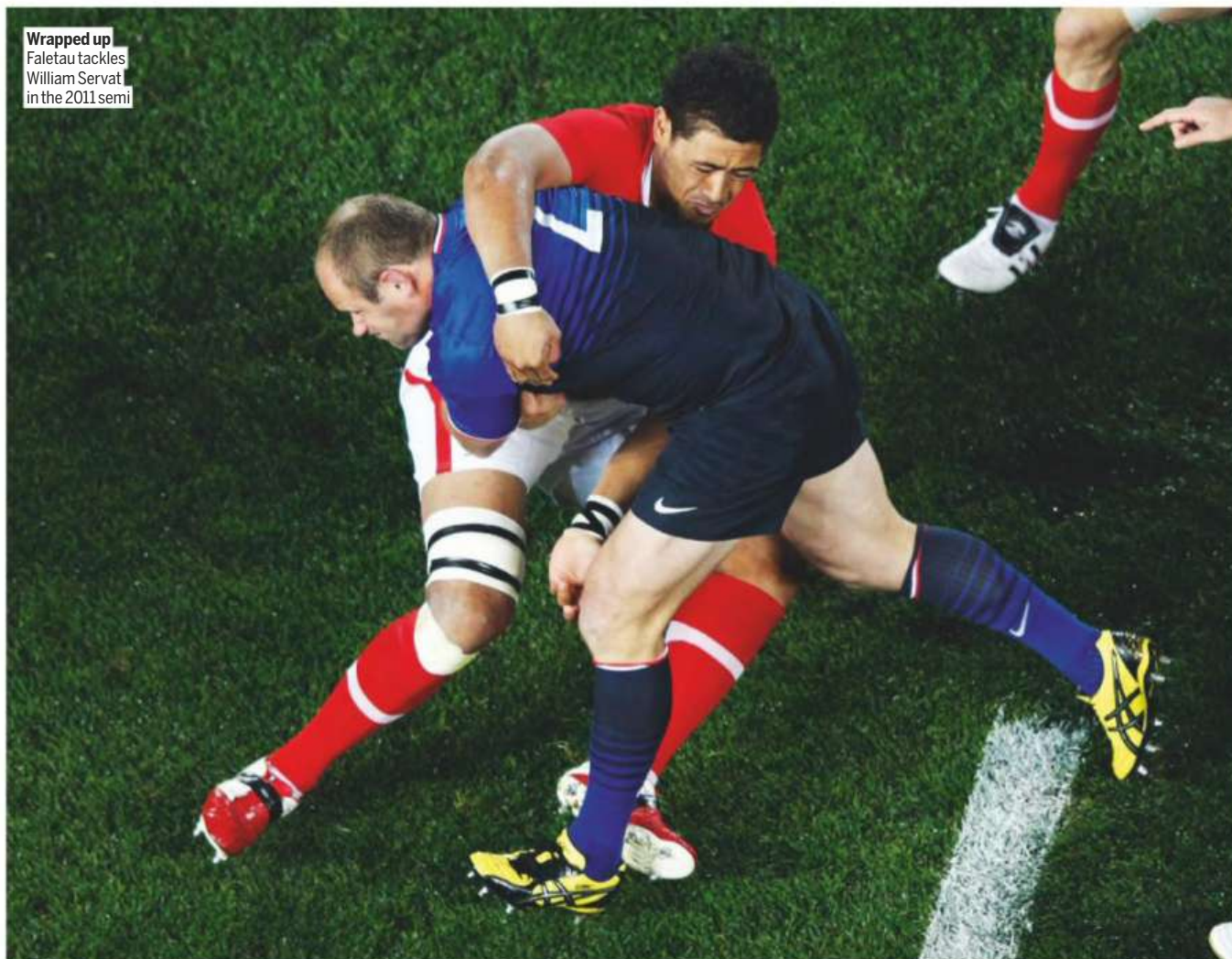
It was a bludgeoning, controlled showing by the



French, with Lemaillon constantly pestering the scoreboard in a 43-31 win. The No 10 grabbed a try, slotted three penalties, clipped over four conversions and dropped two goals. He reigned supreme.

By the time France got to the final they were out of brilliance, however, losing to Australia. Lemaillon did his best with four penalties, but his World Cup run was over: a brief and exhilarating affair.

Wrapped up
Faletau tackles
William Servat
in the 2011 semi



TAULUPE FALETAU
WALES

When minds are cast back to Wales' RWC 2011 campaign, Taulupe Faletau's name might not be the first to jump out. Leigh Halfpenny for his

goalkicking, George North for his try-scoring or Sam Warburton for his tackling might be more prominent.

However, keen observers of the game will pick out Faletau's performances for their consistency and quality. He started all seven of Wales' World Cup games – an even more impressive feat when

you consider he had pulled on the red jersey just three times before flying to New Zealand.

The tournament statistics confirmed his influence, the then 20-year-old topping the tackle charts with 83 and making the most ball carries (81) – and he was duly picked in *Rugby World's* Team of the Tournament. As Wales captain

Sam Warburton said at the time: "For Toby to be 20 years old, playing at No 8 in one of the most physical positions in the game, it's unbelievable seeing him putting in the performances he is at the moment."

Since then, if Faletau has been fit, he has started for Wales, which illustrates how highly he is regarded.



"Having fun and enjoying yourself is key. It enables you to do so much more." Those were the words of Nili Latu during the 2007 World Cup in France – and

the philosophy certainly seemed to pay off for his Tonga team. They overwhelmed the United States 25-15, shocked their Pacific neighbours Samoa 19-15 and left a few dents in South Africa and England before falling to two defeats.

Latu was the inspiration behind it all, his hard-hitting and hard-running style spurring on

his team-mates. Richie McCaw was playing in that World Cup but it was Latu who was handed the No 7 jersey in many pundits' teams of the tournament.

As former England assistant coach John Wells said recently: "I was involved in the 2007 RWC and, for me, he was the outstanding openside of the competition. He was absolutely

tremendous." Little wonder that Newcastle, where Wells is now head coach, have recruited Latu for the coming season.

Latu was a controversial omission from Tonga's 2011 World Cup squad, off-field politics at the centre of the decision, but the 33-year-old is back to lead the *Ikale Tahi* into the 2015 tournament.



Ian Jones was synonymous with the All Blacks engine room throughout the Nineties and played in three World Cups, where each time they came up short. Jones, whose great-grandfather Bunny Finlayson had worn the silver

fern in the 1920s, was an ever-present in the second row.

Although light of frame, he was easy to lift and a technically gifted lineout forward, rampaging round in the loose and scoring nine tries for New Zealand in 79 appearances – still a record for an All Black lock.

He packed down alongside skipper Gary Whetton in the 1991 World Cup at just 23, where they lost 16-6 to the David Campese-inspired Wallabies in



the semi-final. He was to go one better in 1995, when a brilliant New Zealand side reached the final but lost 15-12 to the Springboks in Johannesburg. By 1999, his All Black career was coming to a close and he played just two games in the pool stages.

Post-World Cup, Jones stayed on in England, where he had two years at Gloucester before finishing his career at Wasps in 2002. He is now a commentator.



Few players can be globally identified by a nickname, but that's the case with John Jeffrey – aka the White Shark. The Borders farmer earned the moniker during a trip to the West Indies where his white body, among a multitude of tanned ones, stood out whilst swimming in the sea.

It's a perfect name for a player whose predatory instincts on a rugby field caused nightmares for opponents in the Eighties and early Nineties.

After making his Test bow in the No 7 shirt against the 1984 Wallabies, Jeffrey made the blindside berth his own for the next eight years, retiring as Scotland's most-capped flanker (40) after the 1991 World Cup. A rare exception was the 1988 Calcutta Cup



game, when Jeffrey was an unused replacement and incurred a five-month ban after trashing the trophy on a post-match pub crawl with England's Dean Richards.

Jeffrey was criticised for ignoring the offside laws, but his take was that "you push it to the limit until you're caught – and the ref can only penalise you if he sees you".

He scored six tries in eight World Cup games, two of them in the 28-6 win over Samoa in the 1991 quarter-final.



Rupeni Caucaunibuca's impact on the World Cup was as fleeting as the man was in his prime; he had you on the edge of your seat and then he was out of there.

In 2003, the winger's only World Cup, he scored a scorching try against the French in the group stages.



But he undid his good work by hitting Fabien Pelous with his forearm and after he and Olivier Magne scrapped, both received a yellow card. It would not end there, as after review Caucau copped a two-week ban.

After missing the USA and Japan games, he was back to face the Scots. In the first half, he screamed in for two tries, the second a jinking 55m sprint. He may be remembered as a wasted talent but, with ball in hand, he lit up RWC 2003.



Green giant

Wood scores his third try against USA in 1999



Not many hookers can say they have scored four tries in one Test. Well okay, two have – Japan's Takeshi Kizu got four against Kazakhstan in 2011 – but only Keith Wood has achieved it in a RWC game.

Wood played in three World Cups, starting in 1995 against Japan and ending his career after a last-eight loss to France in 2003, but it was in 1999 that he had his crowning glory.

In Ireland's opening fixture against the USA, Wood drove a lineout for a try, then scored his second from a turnover, caught a rebound from a lineout for his third and fell on a cross-field kick for his fourth.

He got one more World Cup try, against Romania, but never made it past the quarter-finals.



Simon Poidevin will be 57 on the day of the World Cup final and what better gift than to see the Wallabies achieve a hat-trick of world titles on British soil.

The former flanker was at the heart of the 1991 success, when England huffed and puffed in the final and the wall built by Poidevin & Co refused to fall down. It was one of his greatest matches and sadly also his last on the Test stage.

He departed as the first Australian to play 50 Tests, and is recognised as one of the most talented and competitive athletes the sport has seen. "He's got it all," said former Wallaby captain Trevor Allan. "He's a magnificent forward, a killer."

Able to play on both sides of the scrum, Poidevin's fitness regime included aerobic classes and sessions with the Coogee Surf Club beach sprinters.

He despised losing with a vengeance, so much so that he briefly quit Test rugby after the disappointment of Australia's fourth-place finish at RWC 1987.

A target of rugby league scouts, Poidevin rejected all overtures and got his reward at Twickenham 24 years ago as Australia beat England to lift the Webb Ellis Cup.



The World Cup will always bring bittersweet memories for Brian O'Driscoll, because of the litany of woes it has heaped on the Irish. Even that magnificent win over Australia four years ago is

soured by Ireland's tame exit in the quarter-finals, O'Driscoll struggling through the Wales game with a series of stingers that resulted in him having neck fusion surgery on his return.

Yet over four World Cups the man many hail as Ireland's greatest-ever player left a glorious imprint. In 1999, when he was the baby of the team and scored his first Ireland try

in the defeat of USA, he learnt a valuable lesson when seeing Kevin Maggs get smashed by Wallaby Daniel Herbert: never be the type of player who runs straight and looks for contact.

In 2003 he was sensational in the defeats by Australia and France, scoring breathtaking tries and making astounding tackles. He even dropped a goal, one of five in his Test career.

RWC 2007 was a disaster, Ireland failing to progress from their pool. Yet the now captain, whose involvement had been threatened by a fractured sinus, emerged with credit. His pumped-up reaction to his try against Argentina – one of seven World Cup tries he scored – illustrated the passion he brought to the green jersey.

There were to be better moments for O'Driscoll in his record-breaking career, but only nine men have played more World Cup matches than the Dubliner, none of them compatriots.



Corner stop
BOD touches down against Australia



"He played like a champion" is how then Wales coach Steve Hansen described Shane Williams's World Cup debut in 2003. Taken to the tournament as a scrum-half, he was picked on the wing to face New Zealand and went on to score a try (right), create another and generally cause the All Blacks problems, even if Wales lost 53-37. He played in the 2007 and 2011 events too, providing many a magic moment, as these rugby folk testify...

IEUAN EVANS

Former Wales wing

"The way Shane plays is pretty incomparable. He has proved to be a huge advantage to Wales as he gives you something that other teams haven't got. He brings that X-factor."

GRAHAM HENRY

Former New Zealand coach

"He has been consistently world class. They've looked at him to do something special and often he does that. He has scored some outstanding tries."

STEPHEN JONES

Former Wales fly-half

"Shane's such an attacking threat. The more touches he has, the more potent we are."

You're always happy when Shane has got the ball."

WARREN GATLAND

Wales coach

"He has been an outstanding performer, things just seem to happen around him."

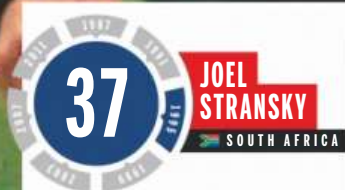
JAMIE ROBERTS

Wales centre

"He's a player who everyone admires. He's a legend."



History makers
Stransky with SA assistant
coach Gysie Pienaar



The 1995 World Cup final was supposed to be the coronation of Jonah Lomu as the world's premier rugby superstar. Instead the crowning moment came from an unshowy 27-year-old

from Pietermaritzburg, who dropped the goal that sent home fans into delirium and united a nation.

At the time, Western Province fly-half Joel Stransky was unheralded in comparison to New Zealand's Andrew Mehrtens, but he was very much the architect of the 1995 triumph.

He had already kicked a drop-goal during normal

time, but with seven minutes to go of extra-time, Francois Pienaar gave Stransky the nod after a scrum was called on the All Black 22m line. Joost van der Westhuizen whipped a pass out and before Josh Kronfeld could get to him, the ball sailed through the thin Johannesburg air and through the posts.

Stransky later said he had never hit a ball sweeter. The

Springboks held on to win the final 15-12 and Nelson Mandela memorably handed Pienaar the Webb Ellis Cup.

After his 22-Test career came to an end, Stransky moved to Leicester, scoring 455 points in two seasons for the Tigers. A keen mountain-biker, he's now a director in the real-estate sector and works in the media for SuperSport.

Smooth mover
Sella tries to get past
NZ in the 1987 final



Described by former France coach Jacques Fouroux as having “the strength of a bull but the touch of a piano player”, Philippe Sella was already a well-established international by the time of the first World Cup in 1987, where his thunderclap tackling and intelligent running lines helped *les Bleus* reach the final.

The game of the tournament was France's semi-final against Australia, with Sella scoring a try in a 30-24 triumph. But France lost 29-9 to New Zealand in the final.

In 1991, there was further disappointment, as France fell in their own backyard to England. He played the final Test of his 111-cap career against England at RWC 1995, winning 19-9 in the third-place play-off.



South Africa's win in 2007 was based on physicality, but there was also a fluidity to their play – and so much of that came from Fourie du Preez.

Renowned for his pinpoint box-kicking, the scrum-half also won plaudits for his razor-sharp thinking in the heat

of the action – perhaps most evident in a 36-0 thumping of England in the group stages, when he created several tries. By the time both sides met again in the final, he had established himself as the world's premier No 9.

In his second World Cup in 2011, South Africa flattered to deceive but du Preez was still the man who made the Springboks tick. He has twice been nominated for the World Player of the Year gong.



How ironic that when Tina Turner sang her hit *We Don't Need Another Hero* in 1985, one of the backing voices was a teenage Lawrence Dallaglio – set to become one of the great heroes of English rugby.

He wasn't to take rugby seriously until three years later, at 16. His ambition was fuelled further by the tragic death of his sister Francesca in the 1989 Marchioness ferry disaster.

Initially a flanker, where he won his first 14 England caps,

Dallaglio became a No 8 and captain of world renown.

The 1999 World Cup was disappointing, England beaten by South Africa in the last eight. But four years later, much of that squad lifted the World Cup in Sydney, and Dallaglio played every minute of the campaign, his surge in the final leading to Jason Robinson's try.

Nothing was to top that during his 85-cap career but he played his part in 2007 too, as England lost in the final.



**JUAN MARTÍN
HERNÁNDEZ**
ARGENTINA

For many, Juan Martín Hernández was the star of the 2007 World Cup, the shining light in an Argentina team who shocked hosts France (twice!) and secured their best-ever finish of third.

He had played a couple of games at full-back in Australia in 2003, but the switch to fly-half made all the difference four years later. There were the three drop-goals against Ireland that secured their passage to the quarter-finals and that huge pass against France in the third-place play-off that led to a try for Federico Martín Aramburú.

Injury prevented him from playing in RWC 2011 but his impact and skill-set is not in doubt. Former South Africa coach Nick Mallett describes Hernández as “quick, strong, intelligent, two-footed, can pass off either hand – he’s a joy to watch”. Here’s what you had to say about *El Majo* (The Magician) on social media...

Most brilliant moment – RWC 2007 Los Pumas vs Ireland. He was terrific, scoring three drops, and was so important.

Oscar Gonzalez

Beating France twice in France!

Toolow Camelio

One of the greatest talents of past ten years, unfortunately plagued by injury, showed full range of skills at RWC 07.

@mlawrie57

Awesome player. His combination with Pichot was key to their success in 2007 & the future of Argentine rugby.

Steve Mateaki

Class act!

Aiue El Harris





Sydney, 13 June 1987:
Australia 24-30 France.
Serge Blanco's try (above) in
the corner in the last minute
of this World Cup semi-final
was voted as the second
greatest RWC try by readers
of *The Daily Telegraph*, the

ball going through 11 pairs
of hands as France attacked
from deep to stun the hosts
and secure a place in the
inaugural final. Four years
later, Blanco captained
France at the World Cup and
played his last Test in the
semi-final defeat by England.

**Who was your toughest
opponent?**

There's not one particular
opponent, but a team: South

Africa in 1980 under Morné
du Plessis. They were the
opponents when I won my
first cap (in Pretoria) and
I never played against such
a tough side during the
rest of my career.

**Who was your favourite
team-mate?**

I played with so many great
players, it's very difficult to
name one. Some stand out,
like Jean-Pierre Rives, Pierre
Berbizier, Patrice Lagisquet

and Didier Codorniou, but
I'm not going to name one
above the others!

**What's the best piece of
advice you've received?**

Jean-Pierre Rives told me
early on to just enjoy my
rugby and to treat it as a
wonderful adventure.

**If you could play with
one player from another
decade, who would it be?**

So many to choose from,
but Gareth Edwards.



Credited with reinterpreting the modern-day Ka Mate version of the haka, Wayne 'Buck' Shelford was a name to strike fear into opposition players.

The No 8 from Rotorua established himself as a tough nut to crack in 1986 when he lost four teeth against France, then had his scrotum ripped at the bottom of the ruck – he had it sewn up pitchside – and played on. It was only after a severe blow to the head that he left the field in the infamous 'Battle of Nantes'.

He played in five out of the six games New Zealand needed to lift the inaugural World Cup in 1987, where his abrasive ball-carrying, soft hands and leadership qualities meant he was the fulcrum of David Kirk's side.

The semi-final, where Wales were hammered 49-6, saw Shelford rumbling over from the base of the scrum but it was better remembered for his right hook on second-row Huw Richards, which ended in the Welshman sprawled out on the turf.

To add ignominy to injury, he was sent off for instigating the incident, leaving Shelford free to play in the final, where France were cast aside 29-9. His Test career ended in 1990.



No England fan – or Australian one for that matter – will forget Jason Robinson punching the ball in his excitement at scoring in the 2003 final. It was England's only try of the final, Robinson outsprinting the Wallabies defence to touch down in the corner (right). Four years later, the league convert bowed out of Test rugby having played in a second World Cup final, a hamstring injury curtailing his involvement in the 15-6 loss to South Africa. Here's what a few of his coaches, team-mates and opponents have to say about him...

JONNY WILKINSON

Former England fly-half

"His ability to beat players both ways, and make 90-degree direction changes without

losing speed, obliterated what I believed were the limits for footwork and speed."

LOTE TUQIRI

Former Australia wing

"You put up a wall of defence and he just pops through it."

SIR CLIVE WOODWARD

Former England coach

"Suddenly the ball was into Jason Robinson's hands (for the 2003 final try). To see his

face was brilliant. For him to deliver on the biggest stage from his league background was massive."

MARK CUETO

Former England wing

"There is no one better in the world at beating a defender."

SHANE WILLIAMS

Former Wales wing

"I used to dread playing against him. He was electric."



Head over heels
Hastings is upended against France in 1995



The late Bill McLaren once said that Gavin Hastings was a "master of timing". He was talking about Hastings's ability to attack the line, but it also summed up the full-back's career as a whole.

In 1987 he kicked brilliantly to draw 20-20 with France in the group stages while in 1991 he was imperious until the semi-final loss against England, with Hastings blaming himself for missing a simple kick in front of the posts that could have squared the tie.

Hastings made amends in 1995 in a tournament where he scored five tries and amassed an impressive 104 points overall. Indeed, only Jonny Wilkinson has gathered more World Cup points than the Scot, who notched 227.



Captaining the Springboks, with all the politics inherent in the job, is arguably the toughest gig in rugby and John Smit did it 83 times – putting him third on the all-time Test captaincy list.

His ability to steer a course through the choppy South African waters is one reason why Peter de Villiers persuaded him to return home from Clermont in 2008 so he could lead the Boks against the Lions and at the 2011 World Cup.

But there was much more to the man they call Barney – after the barfly in *The Simpsons* – than political acumen. Smit was able to inspire his team when it mattered most.

His 'win or bust' speech at Rustenburg in 2006, when

the Boks ended a losing run by beating the All Blacks, probably kept Jake White in his job. And when, at France 2007, Fiji were holding the Boks at 20-20 with an hour played and the momentum behind them, it was Smit's oratory that steadied nerves. He told his team they would kick deep, Bryan Habana would catch the receiver, the forwards would force a turnover and from the scrum they would score. And that's what happened.

South Africa rode out the crisis and went on to win the World Cup, Smit completing a double having led his country to a Junior World Cup triumph in 1999.

Only Victor Matfield has won more Bok caps than Smit, who played Currie Cup rugby at 18 and made his Test debut six months after being asked to switch from prop to hooker. Of his 111 caps, 15 were won at prop.



Known as more of a running fly-half, Stephen Larkham picked a doozy of a time to land his first Test drop-goal. In injury time of the 1999 semi against South Africa, one game after Springbok Jannie de Beer had smashed the world record for drops in a single Test with five, Larkham landed a 48m monster (left). Australia went on to beat France in the final.

As a veteran of three World Cups, it was his partnership with George Gregan that defined Larkham's career, with effortless running and intuitive passing a hallmark of the duo, as the Wallabies also made the 2003 final.

Although things fizzled out with just one game against Japan in 2007 because of injury, his legacy was secure.



Samoa made their World Cup debut on the same day that Pat Lam played his first Test – 6 October 1991 in Cardiff. It proved to be a memorable

occasion for both the team and the No 8, the Samoans stunning hosts Wales to win 16-13.

Eight years later, Lam was back in Cardiff as Samoa captain. The venue had changed from the Arms Park to the Millennium Stadium, but the result was the same.

This time, Lam even got on the scoresheet, crossing for

one of Samoa's five tries in an impressive 38-31 victory.

"If you look back on the footage of that match there's a shot of me speaking to the players in a huddle," Lam recalled when talking to *The Sunday Times* earlier this year.

"People have asked me what I was saying. I was just saying, 'Listen to the silence, listen to

it'. We had totally silenced the Welsh crowd."

A 50% win ratio at World Cups is not the best record but several of those triumphs were very significant. Furthermore, he helped Samoa reach the knockout stages of every World Cup he was involved in – the last eight in 1991 and 1995 and a quarter-final play-off in 1999.



There's an urban myth from the 1995 World Cup that Josh Kronfeld appeared in every frame featuring the match ball during All Blacks games, such as his propensity to follow the ball-carrier around like a human heat-seeker. With his distinctive

scrum cap, Kronfeld was the perfect foil for Jonah Lomu as New Zealand dazzled their way to the final in Johannesburg. He was one of the few All Blacks not to succumb to food poisoning ahead of the South Africa showdown – "I didn't fancy the chicken much" – but the All Blacks still lost 15-12.

Off the pitch, Kronfeld was the laid-back surfer type, playing the harmonica and supporting environmental



causes, but on the field his scavenging, link play, offloading game and support lines were the stuff of legend.

In the 1999 competition, Kronfeld formed part of an effective back row with Taine Randell and Reuben Thorne, before they lost 43-31 to France in one of the most incredible World Cup matches of all time.

After 54 caps, he retired from Test rugby in 2000 and played for Leicester for two seasons.



At first glance, Gareth Rees would not strike you as a world-class player. His physique certainly wasn't the norm for a fly-half – he had a more, shall we say, rounded look about him and filled out the era's shirts better than many of his fellow pivots. Yet Rees is the only man to play in the first four World Cups.

He was a teenager at ten for Canada in 1987 and bowed out of Test rugby with a 27-point haul against Namibia in 1999 – but it was 1991 that brought his finest hour. That was the year Canada reached the quarter-finals for the first, and so far only, time.

Canada were defeated 29-13 by the All Blacks but didn't make life easy for the defending champions.



On target
Rees scored 120 points in 13 RWC games



It was a mark of the man that when David Kirk became the first captain to lift the Webb Ellis Cup, he immediately turned to Andy Dalton so New Zealand's regular skipper could share in the moment of glory. Injury had robbed Dalton of the chance to lead the All Blacks in the inaugural World Cup, so scrum-half Kirk had taken the reins.

He was far from a stand-in, though. He excelled behind a dominant pack, scoring five tries in six games, including one in the 29-9 victory over France in the final.

It was to be Kirk's only World Cup. He played just one more Test and retired at the age of 26. He still holds the record for being the youngest World Cup-winning captain.



As Argentina grew into a major force, winning over neutrals in the last four World Cups thanks to their dogged and passionate displays, there was one constant: Mario Ledesma.

The hooker was a key figure as the Pumas clawed into their first quarter-final in 1999, edging a play-off against Ireland before losing to France. He was also a consoling figure as Argentina just missed out on the knockout stages in 2003.

Four years later, the front row of Ledesma, Rodrigo Roncero and Martín Scelzo were mashing scrums in wins against France, Ireland and Scotland, as the Pumas claimed a third-place finish.

In 2011 Ledesma played his last Test, as the Pumas lost to New Zealand in the quarters.



No quarter given
Ledesma celebrates
beating Scotland in 2007



It's difficult to mention Michael Lynagh in a sentence without adding Nick Farr-Jones. Arguably the finest Wallaby half-back pairing of all time, they were instrumental in helping Australia win the World Cup for the first time.

Farr-Jones played in the 1987 World Cup, where the Wallabies lost to France in the semi-final, and starred in the 1989 Lions series, where he got into a well-documented scrap with Robert Jones.

A brilliant technical passer and darting runner round the fringes, he dovetailed brilliantly with Lynagh to dictate the tempo during the 1991 tournament as the Wallabies saw off England 12-6 in the final. He retired with 63 caps (36 as captain) in 1993.

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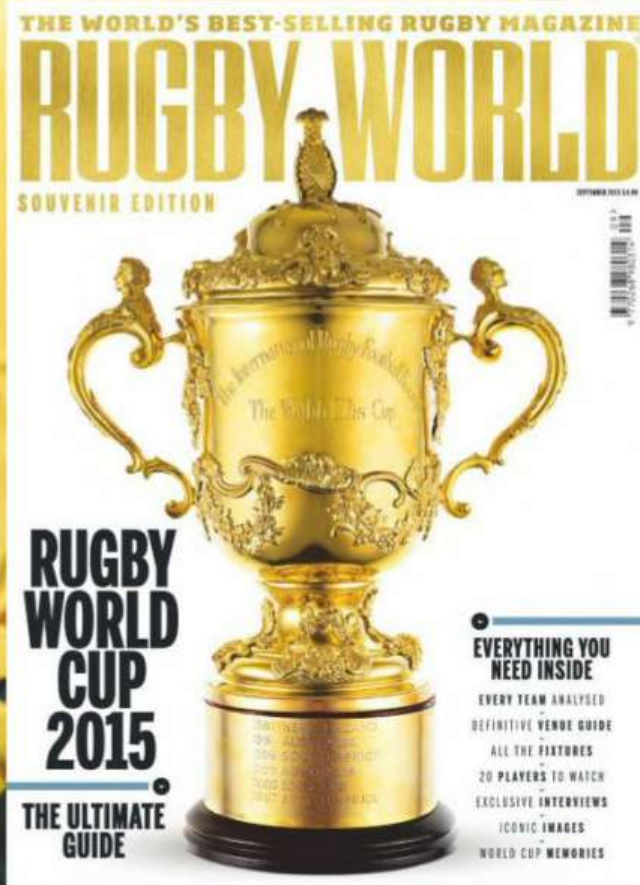
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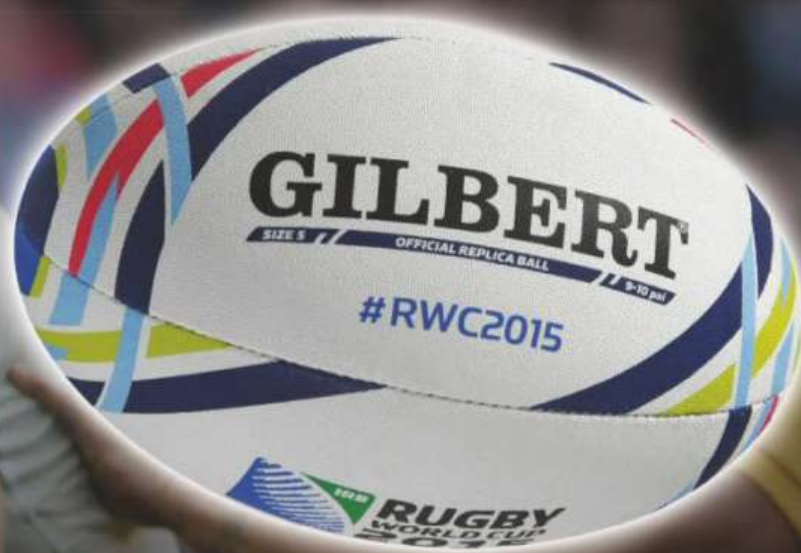
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One World Cup triumph from three attempts seems a scant return for an All Black, and certainly one as distinguished as Sean Fitzpatrick. The man

who has started more Tests as a hooker than anyone in history – 91 times, spanning the amateur and pro eras – enjoyed his World Cup highpoint in 1987.

Capitalising on a hamstring injury to first-choice hooker Andy Dalton, the 23-year-old settled into Test rugby with such ease that he was to prove immovable for the next decade.

His set-piece basics – scrummaging physicality and lineout darts – were at the heart of his play, but he was a force in the loose too, scoring 12 Test tries – five against Australia.

New Zealand won that inaugural World Cup at a canter, and though they flopped four years later, having rested on their laurels, by 1995 Fitzpatrick

was captain of a team that prided themselves on being fitter and faster than every opponent.

The All Blacks cruised into the final but came unstuck when South Africa's superior physicality nullified even the great Jonah Lomu. "Mark Andrews and the big guys in the pack really took it to us," says Fitzpatrick.



First time's a charm
Fitzpatrick fends off
France in the 1987 final



As much as Juan Martín Hernández was the star of Argentina's famous RWC 2007 campaign, Agustín Pichot was the heartbeat of the team – and not only in that tournament. He played in three World Cups, leading the side into the latter



two, and his spot-on service coupled with his sniping runs allowed Argentina to capitalise on their dominant forward pack.

It was his passion, though, that was so evident throughout his 12-year Test career. He inspired his team-mates and pushed Argentine rugby into the wider consciousness. Without his drive, the Pumas would not be part of the Rugby Championship – they would still be on the outside looking in.

Of course, their success in 2007 only aided Pichot's cause – now he had actions to back up his words. Beating France in the opening game set the tone and it was only fitting that Pichot should end his Test career by leading his team to a memorable 34-10 win in the bronze final.

"This has been the end of one of the best sporting stories," he said after that third-place finish. "Everyone will always remember the 2007 Argentina rugby team."



For anyone unsure why Brian Lima's nickname was 'The Chiropractor', simply put his name into YouTube's search bar along with that of Derick Hougaard. The South Africa fly-half felt the full force of one of Lima's hits during the 2003 World Cup, the Samoan grounding Hougaard and dislodging the ball at the same time. Jonny Wilkinson received similar treatment four years later, although this time Lima was warned for the height of the hit in what was his final Test.

They weren't the only ones who will have been nursing aches and pains after playing against Lima during his 16-year international career. He epitomised Samoan physicality, whether playing on the wing in his early days or at centre later on, and would put opposition backs on edge.

He may have lost more World Cup games than he won, but what is of most significance is the length of his career. He is the only man to have played in five World Cups and was the opposite of a bit-part player, starting all bar one of his 18 RWC games between 1991 and 2007.

The key to his longevity? "You have to keep working hard every chance you get," he says. "Once you believe in your own invincibility, that's when you start slacking off and no longer work hard to be the best you could be."

Muscle man
Lima leads the Siva
Tau at RWC 2007



Nelson Mandela, resplendent in his replica Springbok jersey, presenting Francois Pienaar with the Webb Ellis Cup is one of rugby's enduring images. The 1995 tournament marked South Africa's return to sport's world stage after apartheid and, as captain, Pienaar was at the forefront of trying to unite a nation through sporting success. The admirable way he dealt with pressure on and off the field helped the Boks win the title – and here you pay tribute to him on Facebook...

He got a whole nation to believe in the Bokke and showed the world how to beat the All Blacks. What an awesome leader and human being.

Gert Hendrik Kromhout

At the time the Springboks were not a great side and he managed to get the best out of them. At most other World Cups the best side won and would have done so without the captain on the field.

Brett Wright

The 1995 World Cup was the toughest for the Boks, who faced all the big guns, from the start until the final.

Dre Jones

He had so much pressure on his shoulders and he always

knew why it was so important to get the RWC.

Oscar Gonzalez

He inspired not only his team but an entire nation through the aftermath of the apartheid era.

Mark Quinlivan



No one has played more RWC matches than Jason Leonard, with 22 appearances. No one has won more games either, though George Gregan has won as many (18). Between 1991 and 2003 he was a runner-up, finished fourth, went to a quarter-final and won the thing.

Aged 22 he started the 1991 final at loosehead against the Australians – although he has described it as a low ebb. But for 2003's final, which England won, he was a different player.

No longer a starter, as a full-time pro around three stone heavier and possessing greater power, he was a wily substitute prop who could inform tired team-mates about what was needed to win and still have enough dynamism to see it through himself.

High rise
Matfield in lineout
mode in the 2007 final



If you get Man of the Match in a World Cup final because of your imperious display at the lineout, you must be doing something right. Victor

Matfield dominated that area in 2007's final against England, a game the Boks won 15-6, calling the lineout brilliantly and working tirelessly alongside long-time partner Bakkies Botha.

Matfield is the most capped Springbok of all time, but it is the fact he has been considered the finest lineout

operator in the world whenever he has played that has persistently impressed.

For example, in 2011 in a tight 15-8 win over Samoa, Matfield took eight lineout balls, stealing one. When the Boks were knocked out by Australia in the quarters, he again claimed eight lineouts and managed some thefts.

Of course, there is a lot more to big Vic's game – he is understandably brilliant at kick-offs, carries strongly and leads by example – but to become synonymous with a certain skill, at World Cups, is mightily impressive.

And we'll see him again this year since he came out of retirement to boost the Boks.



The first player to cross the whitewash at both the 1987 and 1991 World Cups, Michael Jones is regarded as one of the greatest All Blacks of all time. He redefined the role of the openside flanker, adapted to playing blindside after injury and stood firm in his religious beliefs by refusing to play on Sundays – a stance that cost him selection for RWC 1995. Here ex-players and coaches pay tribute to the man who also coached Samoa at both the 2003 and 2007 World Cups...

JOHN HART

Former New Zealand coach

"To me, the greatest All Black of modern times is Michael Jones. Without peer, a man who played all three loose-forward positions, and with the skills to



play in the midfield. A freak on the field and a gentleman off it."

WILL CARLING

Former England captain

"Until he played it was unheard of to be such a complete player in this position. He was the first multi-talented openside."

MICHAEL LYNAGH

Former Australia fly-half

"Michael Jones was a great athlete and probably the best seven in the world when I played against him in the late 1980s."

BRIAN LOCHORE

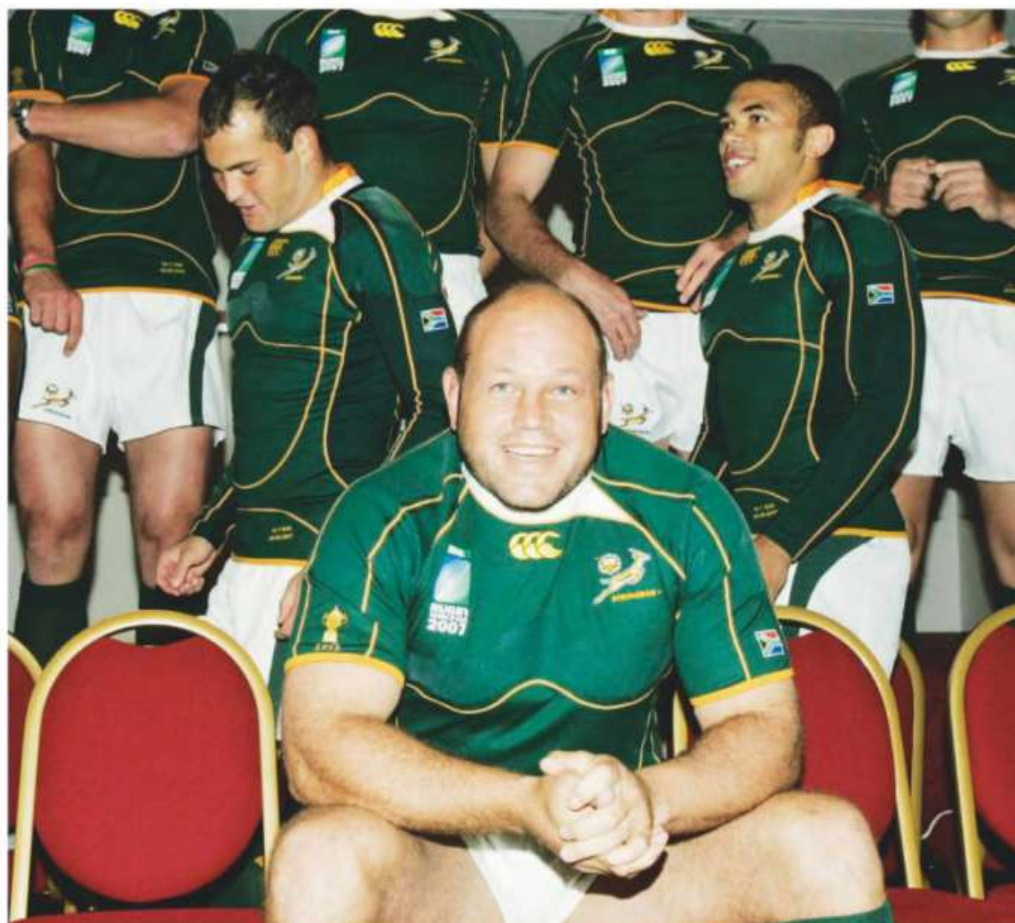
NZ's RWC 1987 coach

"He was a real athlete. We wanted to play a fast, expansive game. Because we wanted to go wide, the breakdown was vital – and Michael's speed was key."

MARTIN JOHNSON

Former England captain

"Michael Jones had the same mystique Joe Montana brought to American football."



Os du Randt had not one but two careers of distinction. Ongoing knee problems forced the loosehead to quit rugby at 28 with 39 caps and a RWC winner's medal, and for years he was content to while away his time on his cattle farm.

But having been lured back to play for Free State in 2003, he was persuaded by Jake White to return for the Springboks. Forty-one more caps and another World Cup triumph followed, making him the only non-Australian to win rugby's holy grail twice.

He was only 22 at RWC 1995, outmuscling All Black Olo Brown – in his view the best tighthead he ever faced – in the final. Fast-forward 12 years and he nullified England captain Phil Vickery in the final.



JOOST VAN DER WESTHUIZEN
SOUTH AFRICA

Such is Joost van der Westhuizen's influence in the game that he is credited with redefining the scrum-half position. Hitherto portrayed as diminutive terriers, van der Westhuizen was 6ft 1in and 14st with the strength of a back-row.

His World Cup record stands up to the closest of scrutiny. He played in three World Cups, appeared in 15 games and scored six tries. The 1995 competition was his finest hour. He tackled Jonah Lomu to a standstill in the final, despite sustaining a broken rib in the semi, and it was his pass that allowed Joel Stransky to slot the World Cup-winning drop-goal.

After a high-profile 1997 Lions series, van der Westhuizen



came to Wales for RWC 1999 as the world's pre-eminent No 9, scoring tries against England, Scotland and Uruguay, but even he couldn't halt a semi-final exit thanks to Stephen Larkham's late drop-goal for Australia.

At 32, he was also part of a poor Boks side who crashed out in the quarters in 2003, losing heavily to New Zealand. It was to be a sad end to his career as he bowed out with a then record 89 caps and 38 tries.



Fresh face
Lynagh takes a kick during the first RWC



MICHAEL LYNAGH
AUSTRALIA

It's Michael Lynagh's favourite moment and one that demonstrates the composure of one of rugby's greatest No 10s.

With four minutes remaining in Australia's 1991 World Cup quarter-final, Gordon Hamilton's converted try had sent Ireland

into an 18-15 lead and the Dublin crowd delirious. Wallaby skipper Nick Farr-Jones was off the pitch, so Lynagh gathered his team behind the posts.

"Be calm and controlled," he said. "We'll kick long and left, the forwards must win the lineout after they kick it out, and we'll go from there. If in doubt about what to do with the ball, hold it tightly and head towards their line. We will win this game."

Tim Horan wanted to go for a drop-goal to level the scores but Lynagh was thinking bigger. With the ball won, he called a 'cut two loop' that led to the fly-half himself scoring the winning try.

Australia won the subsequent final, fitting reward for one of rugby's most popular figures. The Queenslander is Australia's highest-ever point-scorer and the eighth highest globally with 911. Supplementing his forensic

kicking was silky distribution and pure rugby nous – his early Test experience as a 12 helped round out his skills.

Like all the best players, he rose to the occasion. Only two men, Jonny Wilkinson and Gavin Hastings, have scored more than Lynagh's 195 World Cup points and his 47-Test partnership with Nick Farr-Jones is one of the most celebrated pairings the game has seen.



The first word that springs to mind when talking about Bryan Habana is speed. He was one of the stars of the 2007 World Cup, proving the consummate finisher with eight tries in seven starts.

This included four against Samoa and a brace against the USA. He scored a further two tries against Argentina in the semi-final, with one breakaway try, in particular, showcasing the then 24-year-old's blistering pace.

That tournament catapulted Habana into the realms of rugby superstar – he was named World Player of the Year – and he was filmed racing cheetahs and airplanes in the wake of the tournament.

He continued to score regularly on the international

stage, helping the Springboks beat the Lions with a try in the defining 2009 Test. However, the 2011 tournament was more low key as the Boks, under Peter de Villiers, crashed out with a

narrow 11-9 loss against the Wallabies in the quarter-final.

Over the years, the winger, who now plays at Toulon, has improved his all-round game, tightening up his defence, chase

and kicking game. He turned 32 in June and has one of the best strike rates in the international game. So, 11 years after making his South Africa debut, he can be considered an all-time great.



Flash dive
Habana scores against Argentina in 2007



A late inclusion for the 2007 squad, Thierry Dusautoir took his chance on the World Cup stage. He played well, scoring a few tries in their group, but it wasn't until New Zealand met him in the quarters that he did something truly remarkable.

He scored a try and made an incredible 38 tackles to play the key role in a 20-18 French victory. It is a performance that still haunts many Kiwis.

Four years later France looked like they were falling apart, but captain Dusautoir held his side together well enough to reach the RWC 2011 final. They lost 8-7 to the All Blacks, but the flanker was again leading from the front, scoring a try and terrifying New Zealand fans. He was even 2011's World Player of the Year.



Lifting the Webb Ellis Cup was a fitting end to Martin Johnson's decade-long England career. He didn't always find himself on the right side of rugby's laws but he allied brain to his brawn. Take the lead-up to that decisive drop-goal in the 2003 final against Australia: had he not had the nous to make a few extra yards after Matt Dawson's break, Dawson wouldn't have been able to return to his feet and pass to Jonny Wilkinson.

As for the drop-goal itself, Johnson has said: "People told me later it was an ugly kick but it's the best thing I've ever seen on a rugby field." Here's what you had to say about England's inspiring leader on Facebook...

There will never be a greater leader who had the ability to win

a game before it began (2003 Six Nations v Ireland), to win games we shouldn't have been allowed to win (2003 v All Blacks – we had 13 men at one point) and had the foresight to recycle the ball when it really mattered to win the World Cup.

■ Michael Platt

Jonny may have dropped the goal but Johnson was the boss.

■ Neil Baker

Martin Johnson was a true leader. His troops just followed.

■ Carmen E Hancock

He had an immense presence – hugely physical, authoritative, demanding, mentally strong.

■ Steve Rainbow

Never took a backward step. An inspirational player and captain.

■ Adam Windass

A true legend and an example of a real hero on the rugby pitch.

■ Barry Monty Montrose



In the late Eighties and early Nineties, John Kirwan vied with David Campese for the tag of most exciting wing in world rugby. If RWC 1991 belonged to Campo, then 1987 was JK's.

The 6ft 4in wing finished the tournament as joint top try-scorer with six, but it was his long-range effort against Italy that brought him to the attention of fans the world over.

He showed his predatory instincts again in the semi, scoring a brace against Wales, and crossed in New Zealand's 29-9 final win over France (left).

The 1991 tournament was a more sobering affair as he scored only one try and the All Blacks were beaten by eventual winners Australia in the semis. He has since coached Italy and Japan at World Cups.



His very first World Cup try shouldn't have counted, because he dropped the ball in the act of scoring against England in 1987. But they say fortune favours the brave and

it's impossible to conceive of a bolder, more exciting player than David Campese, the outspoken Aussie who scored 64 tries in his 101 Tests.

Ten of those were in World Cups, the goose-stepping winger helping the Wallabies to fourth place in the 1987 event.

By 1991 he was in his prime and playing a pioneering role, coach Bob Dwyer deciding the

winger's jinks, shimmies and sidesteps, allied to a shrewd brain, should be at the heart of Australia's attacking strategy.

His finest hour was the Dublin semi against New Zealand, when he conjured one try for himself and another for Tim Horan. If his scorching angled solo run was special, the touchline dart and over-the-shoulder pass to set up Horan was magical.

The champagne flowed for Campo that night, and so too the eulogies, ex-Lions fly-half Tony Ward saying: "He's a breath of fresh air and perhaps the greatest player of all time."

Australia won the cup but four years later there was to be no repeat. Campese's best days were behind him and he bid farewell in a Barbarians match at the end of 1996.



Golden generation
Campo looks for a pass against Argentina in 1987



There was an internal review into New Zealand's failure at RWC 2007 that contained criticism of Richie McCaw. The captain had chosen not to go for a drop-goal in that tight quarter-final loss to France because it was never in the playbook.

McCaw was offered the chance to have the criticism cut from the public report, but he

declined. "That's not how it should work," he said.

It's that integrity that has helped propel the once chubby North Otago lad into the rugby stratosphere. Flanker McCaw is rugby's most-capped player ever and has captained the All Blacks in more than 100 Tests.

Picked for New Zealand's 2001 European tour on the back of one NPC season, McCaw was an automatic starter by the 2003 World Cup, alongside Reuben Thorne and the late Jerry Collins. The Kiwis went out in the semis, paying the price for selecting Leon MacDonald out



of position at 13, and four years later McCaw's hopes of salving that memory were dashed by that French defeat in Cardiff.

There was to be no heartache at the third time of asking. Despite a foot injury that felt like stepping on a red-hot lump of coal, McCaw gutsed out the 2011 tournament to see his team achieve a second world crown 24 years after the first. Where in 2007 he had been photographed in head-in-hands dismay, now he was raising his arms aloft and speaking to his nation's smiling prime minister, John Key. What a difference four years makes.



He has scored more RWC points than any other player but three of the 277 stand out. Jonny Wilkinson's extra-time drop-goal in the 2003 final against Australia sent England fans into delirium as a northern hemisphere nation lifted the Webb Ellis Cup for the first time. In all Wilkinson played in four World Cups – also reaching the final in 2007, when England lost to the Boks, and playing his last Test at RWC 2011 – but 2003 was undoubtedly the highlight.

What does playing in a World Cup mean to a player?

I've been fortunate to have enjoyed some great World Cups and the buzz of a World Cup never goes away. It's the pinnacle of a player's career.

Talk through the drop-goal...

I knew from fairly early on it was going over. I remember half celebrating but not really celebrating. It felt like a surreal, dream-like situation.

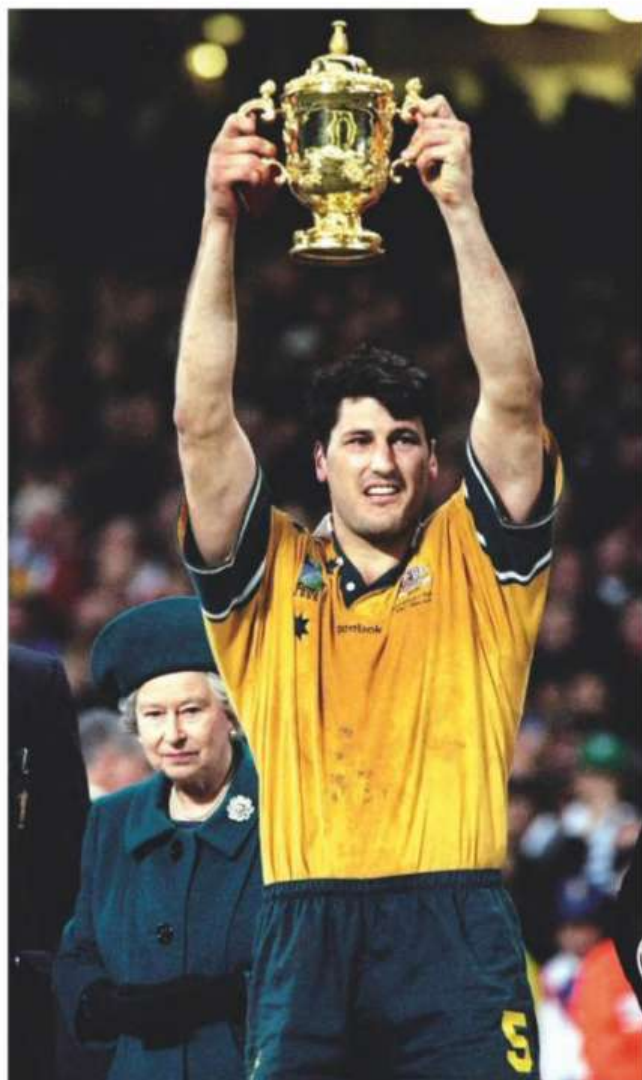
How did your life change after the 2003 win?

The attention is something I wasn't comfortable with. It's a challenge to live your life when you're relatively reserved off the field yet you realise people are looking at you when you go to the cinema.

How did the 2007 World Cup compare to 2003?

We took a very different path to the final. We were low on confidence, but then defeated Australia and France, and were a try in the corner away from winning the final against South Africa. It'll never be seen in the same way as 2003, but the effort put in and the amount players had to drag out of themselves to win games means the respect I have for the guys is the same as 2003.





Peerless in the lineout, nerveless kicking at goal, tireless around the field – John Eales could do it all. Former Wallaby coach Bob Templeton once said of him: “He’s a guy who can run, jump, catch, pass, tackle, play a square cut on the cricket field and post around 11 seconds for the 100 metres.”

To which attributes you can add good timing because when Bob Dwyer set out his stall for winning the 1991 World Cup, the commitment he demanded convinced Bill Campbell, a doctor, to retire – creating a vacancy in the second row. Eales was thrust into the team

at just 20 and went on to star at the tournament.

The lanky Queenslander dominated the lineout to such an extent that, in the final, Australia used him as a decoy in the move that brought the game’s only try by Tony Daly. Eales’s try-saving tackle on Rob Andrew in the closing minutes has gone into folklore.

Australia exited early at RWC 1995 but Eales was voted Players’ Player and Springbok coach Kitch Christie said: “If I could have any player in the world, I’d have John Eales.”

Four years later in Wales, Eales, by now captain, collected his second World Cup winner’s medal, putting him in an elite band. By the time he retired in 2001, he had led Australia 55 times and was the most-capped lock of all time.



Clean through
Horan breaks v
the Boks in 1999



At the 1999 World Cup, Tim Horan won a year's supply of Guinness and £10,000 for charity after scoring a try in just 92 seconds against Romania – less time than the brewer says it takes to pour a perfect pint (119 seconds). A

few weeks later he received a World Cup winner's medal to go with the one from 1991.

One of only six players to have won the Webb Ellis Cup twice, the Australia centre was known for his mental toughness, recovering from a career-threatening knee injury in 1994 to play in the following year's World Cup.

Horan was the midfield constant for the Wallabies in both 1991 and 1999; first he

teamed up with Jason Little and eight years later it was Daniel Herbert. "When we were together, they said we were the world's best centre pairing," Little told Australia's *Courier Mail*. "I got dropped, Daniel Herbert came in and they said he and Tim were the world's best. There was a common denominator there – and it wasn't me or Herbie."

Horan scored four tries at his first World Cup and was

then named Player of the Tournament in 1999. Brian O'Driscoll knows just how good he was that year having been part of the Ireland team beaten 23-3 at RWC 1999.

He still goes down as BOD's toughest opponent, the Irishman saying: "He was a wily old fox. He was world class. He wasn't a big guy but was a smart defender, he was explosive, had great hands and was a great thinker."



It may seem strange to crown someone who never won the Rugby World Cup as the best player to have appeared in the global showpiece, but Jonah Lomu transformed the game. He was rugby's first superstar, crashing onto the scene as a 20-year-old with the size of a heavyweight but the pace of a sprinter at RWC 1995 – as England found to their cost when he scored four tries in the quarter-final. He has scored more World Cup tries than anyone else and is the childhood hero of many a modern player.

What are your memories of that England game at the 1995 World Cup?

At the end of our haka Tony Underwood (the England wing) gave me a little wink. At the time, I thought Tony was being disrespectful. I was thinking, 'I'm going to wipe that smile off your face'.

I never set out thinking I'm going to smash 'em today, I'm going to score heaps of tries and bust them all over the place. Sometimes play

doesn't go your way. Other times, everything clicks. I felt as if I could run all day.

What does playing for the All Blacks mean?

People talk about the All Blacks mentality all the time and how you have to be geared up to play for New Zealand, but all the motivation you need is the black jersey. There's a lot of history in that jersey. If you don't get motivated by pulling it on and running onto the field, there must be something wrong with you.

What's the best piece of advice you've received?

In the 1990s I got a lot of advice from a lot of people; everyone thought they knew what was best for me.

The best advice – for rugby and life – came from a discussion with Zinzan Brooke, Michael Jones and Eric Rush: 'Take what you need and dump the rest'.

If you could play with one player from another era, who would it be?

I can't pick one – Bryan Williams (NZ) and Gareth Edwards (Wales). I've seen some of the amazing tries scored by Bryan; he paved the way for Polynesian boys playing for the All Blacks. Gareth was pure talent.



A star is born
Lomu during that
game v England in 1995



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